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Big win as SC says alimony must for Muslim women

SC says maintenance is an enabler of equality & not charity

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

In a judgment of far-reaching implications, Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that a Muslim woman can seek maintenance from her husband under Section 125 of the CrPC.

It said the "religion neutral" provision applies to all married women, irrespective of their religion.

"The emphasis is on sufficient maintenance, not minimal amount. After all, maintenance is a facet of gender parity and enabler of equality, not charity,"

It said insofar as divorced Muslim women are concerned, Section 125 of the CrPC applies to all such Muslim women, married and divorced, under the Special Marriage Act.

Section 125 broadly says a person with sufficient means cannot deny maintenance to their wife, children or parents.

It dismissed an appeal of Mohd Abdul Samad, who has challenged an order of Telangana High Court affirming the family court order to pay his estranged wife maintenance.

SC says 'religion neutral' provision applies to all married women **PHOTO: PTI**

The top court said in case of an illegal divorce as per the provisions of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, the woman can seek subsistence allowance from her husband.

Justice Nagarathna said remarriage of a divorced Muslim woman does not nullify her claim to a just settlement under the 1986 Act.

"There cannot be disparity in receiving maintenance on the basis of the law under, which a woman is married or divorced. The same cannot be a basis for discriminating a divorced woman entitled to maintenance," she said.

The contentious issue of Muslim women getting maintenance under secular provision of section 125 taken centrestage of political discourse in 1985 when a constitution bench in Mohd Ahmed Khan versus Shah Bano Begum case in an unanimous decision had ruled that Muslim women were also entitled for maintenance. The verdict resulted in a controversy with regard to the true obligations of a Muslim man to pay maintenance to his divorced wife, particularly beyond the 'iddat' period. Rajiv Gandhi government, as an attempt to clarify the position, brought the 1986 Act wherein it was sought to specify the entitlements of such a woman at the time of divorce. *—PTI*

SC judge opts out of gay marriage plea

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

PHOTO: ANI

Senior-most Supreme Court Judge Sanjiv Khanna recused himself from considering pleas seeking review of the apex court's judgement last year declining legal recognition to same-sex marriage, on Wednesday. According to the sources, Justice Khanna has cited personal reasons for his recusal.

The recusal of Justice Khanna would necessitate reconstitution of a fresh five-judge constitution bench by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud for considering the review pleas.

In a setback to gay rights activists, a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chandrachud had on 17 October, 2023 refused to accord legal backing to same-sex marriage, saying there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law.

It had made a strong pitch for the rights of queer people so they don't face discrimination in accessing goods and services that are available to others, safe houses known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble. LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption and enrollment as parents in schools. *—PTI*

Another bridge collapses in Bihar, 13 in 3 weeks

SAHARSA, 10 JULY

Bihar witnessed another bridge collapse on Wednesday, making it the 13th such incident in the state in a span of three weeks, an official said. The bridge collapsed at Mahishi village in Saharsa district earlier in the day, he said. There were no reports of any injury or fatality. The Bihar government has suspended at least 15 engineers in connection with series of recent incidents of bridge collapse reported from various districts, including Siwan, Saran, Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had instructed officials to conduct a survey of all old bridges in the state and identify those that need immediate repair. *—PTI*

NATO's Norway donates six F-16 jets to Ukraine

DENMARK, 10 JULY

Norway Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store on Wednesday said that the country will donate six F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine to defend itself from Russian attacks, adding that the jets will be important for Kyiv. Ukraine has long pleaded for the sophisticated fighter to give it a combat edge against Russian firepower. No date was announced as to when Norway will donate the six jets, but Gahr Store said, "we aim to start the donations during 2024."He said Kyiv's "ability to defend itself against attacks from the air is absolutely crucial in its defensive battle against Russia." *—AP*

>>>More on Page 6

AI-Vistara merger might impact 600 non-flying staffs

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Around 600 non-flying staff of Air India and Vistara are likely to be impacted by the two airlines' mega-merger, and efforts will be made to provide job opportunities to the affected employees within Air India group and Tata companies, sources said on Wednesday. Tata Group-owned loss-making full-service carriers Air India and Vistara together have more than 23,000 employees. Those who cannot be accommodated in both groups will be provided a voluntary separation scheme package. Once the deal is complete, Singapore Airlines will have a 25.1 per cent stake in Air India. Vistara is a joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Tata Group. *—PTI*

Clashes in Uttarakhand, WB, Bihar amid bypolls

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Assembly bypolls across 13 constituencies in seven states saw moderate to brisk voting on Wednesday. The polling day witnessed isolated incidents of violence in Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Bihar.

In Uttarakhand's Manglaur constituency, four people were injured in a clash between supporters of rival parties at a polling booth. Roorkee Civil Line Kotwali in-charge RK Saklani told PTI that a report was received about the clash between workers of two parties at booth number 53-54 in Libbarheri in Manglaur.

Purported videos of the clash on social media showed Congress candidate and former MLA Qazi Nizamuddin taking a man in bloodstained clothes to the hospital. He accused BJP of throttling democracy by sowing seeds of hatred. Another video showed him embracing an injured party worker at the hospital and crying aloud.

Violence erupted at the booth when some people with half their faces covered entered the booth and started stopping people from casting their votes, sources said.

In West Bengal, violence was reported in Bagdah and Ranaghat Dakshin assembly segments as the BJP accused TMC activists of assaulting its booth agents and stopping its candidates from visiting some polling stations.

BJP candidates Manoj Kumar Biswas and Binay Kumar Biswas from Ranaghat Dakshin and Badgah respectively claimed they were not allowed to visit some booths. Manoj Kumar Biswas alleged that BJP camp offices in some areas were ransacked by TMC.

BJP's Maniktala candidate Kalyan Chaubey faced protests and was greeted with "go back" slogans allegedly by TMC activists as he tried to enter a booth in the constituency. *—PTI*

1ST PM AFTER NEHRU

PM meets Austrian Prez; bats for deeper bilateral ties

VIENNA, 10 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen on Wednesday. The two leaders discussed ways to further expand bilateral cooperation in several sectors, including environment and combating climate change.

"Had a very good meeting with Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen and discussed ways to expand India-Austria cooperation," Modi said in a post on X after the meeting.

They deliberated ways to strengthen India-Austria relations in a host of sectors, the prime minister's office said. As the world's most populous country and a global economic power, India plays an important role in the fight against climate change.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen, in Vienna, Austria, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Modi, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in over 40 years who arrived from Moscow after meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin also met with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer. "Had an excellent meeting with Chancellor @karlnehammer. . It is also the time when we are marking 75 years of India-Austria friendship," Modi said in a series of posts on X. *—PTI*

The impact of the collision was so huge that the bus was completely crush **PHOTO: PTI**

18 KILLED, 19 INJURED AS BUS RAMS INTO MILK TANKER

UNNAO, 10 JULY

Eighteen people died and 19 were injured when a double-decker sleeper bus hit a milk tanker on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway here on Wednesday, officials said.

The accident took place around 5 am near Jojikot village in Behta Mujhawar police station area.

District Magistrate Gaurang Rathi said prima facie the bus, which was on its way to Delhi from Motihari in Bihar, was speeding and hit the milk tanker from behind. *—PTI*

19 dead as floods devastate over 600 villages in UP

LUCKNOW, 10 JULY

More than 600 villages in 12 districts of Uttar Pradesh are affected by floods, while 19 people were killed in rain-related incidents across the state in the last 24 hours, UP relief department officials said on Wednesday.

Uttar Pradesh recorded an average of 30 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours, the officials said.

Rains have resulted in a rise in water level in several rivers, resulting in floods in 633 villages of 12 districts, according to the department.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited some flood-affected areas in Lakhimpur Kheri and Pilibhit districts.

"Teams of the NDRF and the SDRF are coordinating with the local administration to mitigate flood-related issues in the affected areas. We have set up 712 flood relief camps for people in affected areas and 226 animal shelters for their livestock," State Relief Commissioner Naveen Kumar said. *—PTI*

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Bhavani Revanna **PHOTO: ANI**

SC refuses to junk anticipatory bail given to Bhavani

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to set aside the anticipatory bail granted to Bhavani Revanna, the mother of suspended JD(S) MP and rape accused Prajwal Revanna, in a kidnapping case involving one of the victims of her son's alleged sexual assaults.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan issued notice to Bhavani on the appeal filed by the Karnataka government challenging a Karnataka High Court order.

"The accused is a woman who is aged 55 years. There are serious allegations against her son of indulging in atrocious things. He ran away and eventually, he was caught. In a case of this kind of allegations, what will be the role of the mother in abetting the crime committed by her son?" the bench told senior advocate Kapil Sibal appearing for the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the Karnataka government.

Sibal said the relief granted was the "most unfortunate" and the victim was under captivity on the directions of the family. The High Court had on 18 June granted anticipatory bail to Bhavani while emphasising that she had already answered 85 questions during the investigation, making it unfair to claim she was not cooperating with SIT, which is probing the sexual abuse cases against her son. *—PTI*

WRONG DRUGS PRESCRIBED

'1 in 2 prescriptions deviate from guidelines'

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

A study conducted by a team of researchers including those at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), has found that nearly one in every two medical prescriptions issued in India deviated from standard guidelines, with approximately a tenth showing "unacceptable deviations."

The team analysed 4,838 prescriptions issued by physicians between August 2019 and August 2020 for their compliance with standard treatment guidelines.

These prescriptions were issued at 13 Rational Use of Medicines Centres (RUMC), set up by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and located in tertiary care teaching hospitals and medical colleges across the country.

The researchers found that among the 475 prescriptions they deemed to show unacceptable deviations from the standard guidelines,

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Pantoprazole was prescribed the most often in 54 of them.

Pantoprazole is known to help bring down the acid created in stomach and is commonly available in pharmacies under many drug names, such as Pan 40.

In 54 prescriptions, the condition being diagnosed was Herpes Zoster, or shingles, a viral infection causing painful rashes anywhere on the body.

Where there were no Indian guidelines or recent updates in the guidelines, physicians used the international guidelines, such as those of the American Association of Family Physician or American Heart Association. *—PTI*

K'TAKA INCLUDES ANTI-SNAKE VENOM IN ESSENTIAL DRUG LIST

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

The State Health Department has added Anti Snake Venom (ASV) drug to essential drug list after the surge in the snake bite cases seen a rise in the State. A total of 5,418 cases and 36 snake bite deaths reported in 2024.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Wednesday announced various guidelines under the Snake Bite Prevention and Control Programme will be available at all Primary Health Care units. Karnataka government launched the Snake Bite Prevention and Control Programme in 2023-2024 to reduce snake bite-induced deaths by 2030. Rao said, "All government health facilities will provide free treatment to snake bite victims, particularly benefiting Below Poverty Line cardholders under the AB-ArK scheme under this programme." *—Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

Karnataka Media Academy gets its 1st woman Prez

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

Senior journalist Ayesha Khanum was appointed as the first woman president of the Karnataka Media Academy under the Department of Information and Public Relations on Wednesday. Khanum, a veteran with 26 years of experience, previously worked with Doordarshan, Asian Age, Aaj Tak, and Star News. Hailing from Kalaburagi, she is known for her works regarding social justice, regional equity, and gender equality Joining Khanum, the other newly appointed members are MN Ahobalapati from Chitradurga, K Venkatesh, a senior press photographer from Bengaluru, and K Ningajja, a senior journalist from Koppal. This appointment signifies a step towards inclusivity within the Karnataka Media Academy. Khanum brings a wealth of experience, having covered major events such as the Sri Lanka conflict, elections in 11 Indian states, and five general elections. The Karnataka Media Academy was established to promote Kannada as a powerful medium. Previously, it was known as Karnataka Press Academy. ***—Salar News***

Boy missing for 5 years found in Anekal

KOLAR, 10 JULY

A 9-year-old boy who went missing from New Life Charitable Trust in KGF was found on Tuesday doing road side business along with his father at Anekal. The boy went missing on 5 November, 2019. According to the police, the boy ran away from the hostel. He was produced before the Child Protection Committee and was handed over to his parents after counselling. According to Police Inspector CEN Cell Lakshminarayan , the boy was found with his father after a major breakthrough in tracing some phone numbers related to the boys' parents. He said the boy's father Muniraju is a petty trader. He only had admitted him at the Hostel run by an NGO in KGF. ***—Salar News***

PHOTO: SALAR

Kolar: 108 feet Goddess Bethala statue inaugurated

KOLAR, 10 JULY

A 108-foot statue of Goddess Bethala was inaugurated by performing Kumbabhisheka ritual in Kolar, on Sunday. It is said to be the highest statue of Bethala. Spread across three fourth acres of land at the village, the site has statues and idols of various Shakthi Gods and Goddesses, said Chandranath Agori, religious head Chandranath, a mason by profession, said that some two years back he had a dream where Shakthi God Bethal ordered him to construct a temple for him in the lands owned by him so that that could bring prosperity to the villagers. Prior to incarnation, a three day program of invoking the god and the spirit were performed by various religious heads drawn from various parts of South India. He said it has been proved that anyone with health issues, finance and other difficulties would get the issue solved in no time after praying here. He said every week on Friday special pujas are being held right from wee hours up to midnight. ***—Salar News***

State nets ₹6,450 cr investment from Japan, S Korea firms

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

State secured Rs 6,450 crore in investment commitments from Japan and South Korea with potential to create more than 1,000 jobs, Minister MB Patil said on Wednesday.

He was on a visit to the two countries from 24 June to 5 July.

The delegation he had led met industry leaders and conducted roadshows for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). He said the delegation met more than 35 industry leaders and 200 companies in the two roadshows conducted in Japan and South Korea.

In Japan, the delegation met with key industry leaders including those from Renesas Electronics Corporation, Toyota Motor Corporation, Yamaha Motor Company, Sumitomo Heavy Industries, Panasonic Energy, Nidec Corporation, Nissan Motor Corporation, Brother Industries, Shimadzu Corporation, and Hitachi, Patil said. In South Korea, meetings were held with Samsung Electronics, LG Energy Solutions, LX Electronics, NIFCO Korea, OCI Holdings, Krafton, HYAC, Hyundai Motors, YG-1, and Hyosung Advanced Materials, among others. Patil said Osaka Gas has committed to expanding its gas distribution infrastructure in State with an investment of Rs 5,000 crore over the next five years.

DN Solutions signed a Rs 1,000 crore MoU to establish a manufacturing facility for precision tools and automation systems, expected to create approximately 350 jobs.

Japanese automobile component supplier Aoyama Seisakusho too expressed its interest to invest

Rs 210 crore to set up a manufacturing facility in the Japanese Industrial Township in the State, Patil said. ***—PTI***

ED raids ex-minister, Cong MLA in Valmiki 'scam'

ED conducts searches in 20 locations in K'taka, Andhra, T'gana, M'rashtra

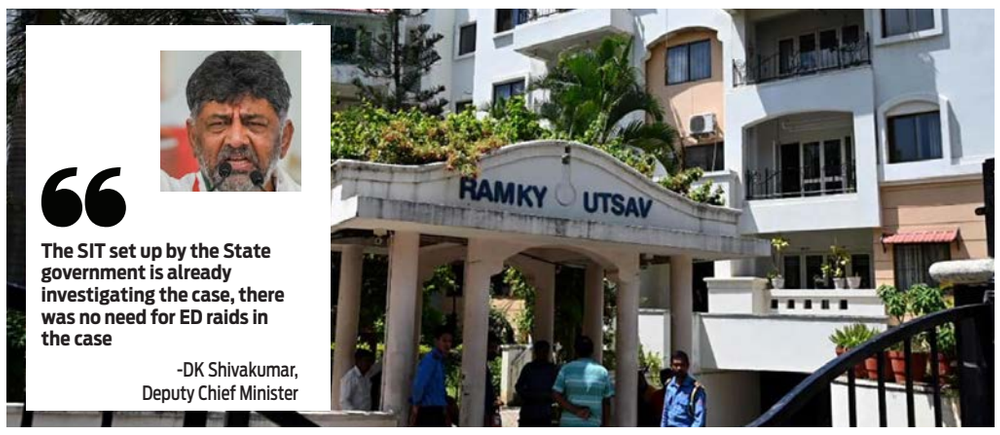
BENGALURU, 10 JULY

Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday carried out searches in four states, including at the premises of former minister and Congress leader B Nagendra and MLA B Daddal. This is in the money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Limited, official sources said.

The agency covered around 20 locations in State, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra as part of its investigation in the case registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

The premises of Congress leader and former tribal welfare and sports minister Nagendra and Congress MLA from Raichur rural seat Daddal in Bengaluru, Raichur and Ballari, some bullion operators in Mumbai and some entry operators and linked entities are being searched. An armed escort of the CRPF accompanied the ED teams.

Nagendra's PA was taken to the ED office in Bengaluru for questioning even as the officials recovered some documents and computer hardware.



> **The SIT set up by the State government is already investigating the case, there was no need for ED raids in the case**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

ED officials raid ex-minister B Nagendra's flat in Dollars Colony on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Daddal was also the chairperson of the Corporation.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of CID had questioned the two on Tuesday in this case. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said his government will not interfere in the ED probe. "Let ED do their job, we won't interfere in that.

The alleged scam came to fore after accounts superintendent of the Corporation, Chandrasekharan P, was found dead on 21 May. He wrote a purported suicide note alleging illegal transfer of money from the Corporation to various bank accounts.

Subsequently two officials were suspended. With mounting pressure, minister Nagendra resigned on 29 May.

Congress, thereafter, constituted SIT, which has so far arrested 11 people in connection with the case.

In the suicide note, Chandrasekharan alleged that there was an unauthorised transfer of Rs 187 crore belonging to the state-run Corporation from its bank account.

Further, Rs 88.62 crore was illegally deposited into various accounts of some IT companies and a Hyderabad-based cooperative bank.

While the State has constituted the SIT to investigate it, the Central Bureau of Investigation is also probing it simultaneously based on a complaint by the Union Bank of India.

Meanwhile, State BJP chief B Y Vijayendra said that based on the Union Bank of India's letter, CBI has registered an FIR, and now the ED is also conducting raids in connection with the case. "We welcome ED raids on Nagendra and Daddal," he said. ***—PTI***

4,500 acres land required for 2nd airport: MB Patil

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

Minister MB Patil on Wednesday insisted upon the need for a second International Airport near Bengaluru. Patil said this will reportedly handle at least 100 million passengers annually, and it would require at least 4,500 acres to 5,000 acres of land to cater to the fastest growing City.

"We will have a meeting with technical experts before moving the proposal to Chief Minister and the Cabinet on it. In the next three months you will see things moving in that direction," Patil told reporters here.

Stating that Bengaluru being the technology and innovation hub has Kempegowda International Airport which is the third busiest airport after Delhi and Mumbai, he said it currently handles 52 million passengers and 0.71 million tonnes of cargo annually.

It would peak to 110 million passengers and 1.10 million tonnes cargo by 2035, he said.

When he was told about the Tamil Nadu government's announcement to build an international airport in Hosur, Patil said only after State announced this project did the neighbouring state start talking about building a new airport in Hosur.

MB Patil ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Minister MB Patil on Wednesday insisted upon the need for a second International Airport near Bengaluru. Patil said this will reportedly handle at least 100 million passengers annually, and it would require at least 4,500 acres to 5,000 acres of land to cater to the fastest growing City.

He, however, clarified that Karnataka has no problem with that.

On the possible location of the second airport, the minister pointed out that there should be no hills, rivers/seas or high-rise buildings anywhere around it.

In addition, there should be a good quality state and national highway as well as rail and metro connectivity.

—PTI

BJP to hold 'mega' protest in Mysuru over MUDA scam

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

Karnataka BJP will be holding a "mega" protest in Mysuru on 12 July in connection with an alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), which involves plots given to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi, its President BY Vijayendra said on Wednesday. The party demanded the resignation of Siddaramaiah.

Vijayendra also alleged that Siddaramaiah has not mentioned this over three acres of land belonging to his wife in his 2013 Assembly election affidavit, which is a clear case of violation of Model Code of Conduct and Representation of the People Act.

The protesters will demand allocation of sites to the poor by withdrawing those distributed illegally, and a CBI probe into the "scam" as the allegations are against the Chief Minister and his family, he said, adding that BJP will also raise the issue during the coming Assembly session.

- Vijayendra also alleged that Siddaramaiah has not mentioned this over three acres of land belonging to his wife in his 2013 Assembly election affidavit, which is a clear case of violation of Model Code of Conduct

It is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA.

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where MUDA developed a residential layout. Speaking about the alleged MUDA "scam", Vijayendra accused the Chief Minister of giving wrong information to the public. Howver, Siddaramaiah rejected BJP's demand for a CBI probe into the alleged fraudulent allotment of sites to land losers by MUDA. ***—PTI***

POLITICAL ROW

CM says Cabinet will decide on renaming Ramanagara

MYSURU, 10 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said the State Cabinet would take a decision on the proposal to rename Ramanagara district as 'Bengaluru South.'

The proposal to rename the district, consisting of Ramanagara, Magadi, Kanakapura, Channapatna and Harohalli taluks, has once again gained steam, with a Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar-led delegation on Tuesday meeting Siddaramaiah and submitting a memorandum to raise the pitch. Taking a dig at the proposal, JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Tuesday reportedly said that he would reverse the plan, if implemented, in the event of him becoming Chief Minister again.

Kumaraswamy, a former chief minister, also alleged that the motive behind the proposal was to exploit real estate opportunities there.

Ramanagara is the home district of Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress chief. Reacting to Kumarawamy's comments, Siddaramaiah said: "first of all they won't come to power. So he (Kumaraswamy) reversing it is an illusion."

Pollution Control Board gives Rs 5 crore cheque to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to help people hit by environmental pollution ***PHOTO: PTI***

Will put caste census report before Cabinet, says CM

Siddaramaiah has said that the caste census report will be put before the State Cabinet.

The Socio-Economic and Education Survey report was submitted to the State government in February this year but was put on hold due to Lok Sabha election. ***—PTI***

KPCC FORMS PANEL TO PREPARE FOR BBMP POLLS

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has announced the formation of a special committee tasked with preparing a preliminary report for the upcoming Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) elections. According to a press release issued by KPCC, the committee members are directed to engage with MLAs, MPs, District Commissioners, and others constituency-wise basis to gather data within a month as these will be crucial to plan the strategy.

This decision by KPCC comes in the backdrop of recent discussions with the State government regarding the future of BBMP elections. It is reported that the government is contemplating legislation to split BBMP into five City corporations. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had raised a green flag for the decision and the government is actively preparing to present its case before Karnataka High Court. ***—Salar News***

Land hunt for suburban rlys to start post bankers nod

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

The land acquisition process for Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project (BSRP) for Corridor-1 will start only after getting approvals from the bankers and Indian Railways, a senior official said on Wednesday.

According to Railway Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) (K-RIDE) Managing Director N Manjula, Germany based KfW Development Bank and European Investment Bank have approved the loan for the Corridor-1 and soon the work would start.

"Regarding Corridor-1 the bank loan has happened. Tender documents have been sent to KFW and EIB, because the project is happening with their help. We will start the project once we get the clearance from them," Manjula said.

"After getting approval, we will identify the land required for the project and start the land acquisition process," Manjula explained. Karnataka government has set a deadline of December 2027 for all the four corridors to start operation. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had set a deadline of 40 months for the completion of BSRP while laying its foundation in June 2022. According to him, the project should have completed by December 2025. Since the project appeared nowhere closer to being realised by December 2025, Karnataka government revised the deadline to December 2027. ***—PTI***

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda examines seized imported chocolates in Bengaluru on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

DESPITE GOVT CAP

Pvt hospitals charge ₹900 for dengue test

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

Despite the government's order to cap dengue testing rates, many private hospitals and labs have flouted the rules and are charging more than double the price.

However, private labs and hospitals in the City claim they have not received any government order and will continue charging their usual price. "We have not received any government order," a private hospital doctor from Seshadripuram told Salar News on the condition of anonymity.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Amid the rising number of dengue cases in the City, the Health Department has capped the rates for NS1 antigen ELISA and IgM antibody tests at Rs 300, and rapid card tests for the NS1 antigen, IgM and IgG antibodies at Rs 250.

However, labs and hospitals are charging Rs 750 to Rs 2,000 for the same. An investigation by **Salar News** revealed that several testing centres are not adhering to the government-mandated prices. For instance, Basavanagudi testing centre charges between Rs 800 and Rs 1,500 for ELISA, NS1 and IGM tests.

Shivajinagar testing centre is quoting Rs 750 per test. Lab is HSR Layout, Horamavu, Chickpet claimed they initially charged Rs 850 for dengue testing but cut the price to Rs 300 after government order.

"The private hospital in Seshadripuram charged my friend Rs 300 for dengue test, but when I took my family member, they quoted Rs 990," a patient told Salar News.

However, there are some exceptions. Hospitals like Manipal, Maratha, and Sparsh are following the government-mandated prices.

The State Health Department has acknowledged the issue and told Salar News that it is a must for hospitals and labs to follow government rules under the Epidemic Diseases Act. Patients who are suffering can report the incident by calling 1902. ***—Salar News***

Chocolates with fake FSSAI stickers sold in malls, 1 held

BENGALURU, 10 JULY

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) raided a chocolate warehouse where chocolates with fake Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) stickers were sold across the City.

The CCB arrested a person and seized Rs 1 crore worth of fake chocolates. CCB's Economic Offences Wing sleuths raided a warehouse at Narayana Swamy Layout in Sudhama Nagar.

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda said, "The accused is a foreign national and was residing in Bengaluru on a business visa. During the interrogation, it was found that the accused used to travel to different countries like the US, the UK and France bringing popular brands of chocolates and snacks from these countries and affix fake FSSAI sticker and sell it in the market."

These products have been sold across shopping malls and supermarkets in theCity. The Kalasipalya police official told Salar News, "We don't know how many products are out there in the supermarkets and we have instructed the Food Safety Department to crack down on tits availability in the market."

—Salar News

Ram Mandir tableau to be at New York parade

NEW YORK, 10 JULY

A tableau featuring the Ayodhya Ram Mandir will be the highlight of the India Day parade at the heart of Manhattan next month to commemorate the Indian Independence Day. Leading diaspora body Federation of Indian Associations NY-NJ-CT-NE (FIA) said at a curtain-raiser event hosted at the Consulate General of India in New York that the 42nd Annual India Day Parade NYC, to be held on 18 August, will feature the special Ram Mandir tableau. FIA further announced that renowned Indian actor Pankaj Tripathi will be the Guest of Honour. Consul General of India in New York Binaya Pradhan highlighted the history of the parade and assured that the consulate will support the event and together showcase India's great culture to New York and the US. Representatives from the Vishva Hindu Parishad of America, Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha and Siddhivinayak Temple together unveiled the small replica of the Ram Mandir float. *—PTI*

Lone Sikkim SDF MLA Norbu joins SKM

GANGTOK, 10 JULY

Tenzing Norbu Lamtha, the sole MLA from Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), officially joined the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) on Wednesday."I am pleased to meet the Hon'ble Member of Legislative Assembly from the 23-Syari Constituency, Shri Tenzing Norbu Lamtha, at my official residence, Mintokgang, today. He has officially joined our SKM family," Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang posted on Facebook. Tamang acknowledged that Lamtha had raised concerns regarding the welfare of his constituency, which will now be addressed as part of a comprehensive development plan for the area and its people. Lamtha, had defeated Education Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha by 1,314 votes in the recent assembly polls. *—PTI*

WB businessman assaulted, house vandalised by mob

KOLKATA, 10 JULY

A businessman in West Bengal's Howrah district was allegedly assaulted and his house vandalised after a kangaroo court session was convened by a local panchayat pradhan and TMC leader to resolve his marital dispute. Two people were arrested for their alleged involvement in the incident that occurred on Tuesday, police said. The businessman, identified as Sahabuddin Sepai, had agreed to participate in the Kangaroo court session. During the session, Kandua gram panchayat pradhan and local TMC leader Khalil Ahmed confronted the businessman and left with his associates after an argument, locals claimed. *—PTI*

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday drove Prime Minister Narendra Modi around his residence in a golf cart **PHOTO: PTI**

PM's Moscow visit historic, says Russia

Focus of the meet was on expanding trade ties

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Moscow and the outcomes of his summit talks with President Vladimir Putin were "historic and game-changing" considering the prevailing turbulent geopolitical environment, Russia's Charge d'affaires Roman Babushkin said on Wednesday.

The Russian diplomat said the focus of the talks between the two leaders was on expanding India-Russia trade and economic ties.

In his first trip since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Modi paid a two-day visit to Moscow on 8 and 9 July during which he held summit talks with Putin.

"The leaders have decided to strengthen cooperation in all areas. It is a historic and game-changing move, especially given the turbulent environment around us," Babushkin said at a media briefing.

"It has got unprecedented coverage and presumably overshadowed all other events. It seemed that the whole world was watching it," he said.

Babushkin also criticised the US for making certain comments ahead of Modi's visit to Moscow and described the remarks as interference in ties between the two nations.

"It was the conduct of two independent global powers based on mutual trust and respect. The external factors don't play much role when it comes to Russia-India relations," he said.

India and Russia have established foundational convergences in key areas of our cooperation, he said.

The senior diplomat said both sides vowed to expand cooperation in a range of key areas including fossil fuel, nuclear energy and trade. *—PTI*

EXCISE SCAM

Kejri, AAP leaders sought ₹100cr in kickbacks: ED

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal "directly used" part of the alleged Rs 100 crore generated from the "kickbacks" of the Delhi excise policy "scam" by staying in a luxury hotel in Goa, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has claimed in its charge sheet filed against the AAP supremo.

The federal probe agency also said the Group of Ministers constituted by his government in this context was a "sham". A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court on Tuesday took cognisance of the prosecution complaint, filed on 17 May, and issued a production warrant for the jailed AAP leader for 12 July.

PHOTO: PTI

The 55-year-old politician and the AAP have been named as accused in this seventh supplementary charge sheet filed in the case. "Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of NCT of Delhi is the kingpin and key conspirator of the Delhi excise scam in collusion with ministers of Delhi govt, AAP leaders and other persons."

It said that Kejriwal also "mingled" these proceeds of crime with the funds of the Delhi government. It has been alleged that the 'South Group' of politicians and liquor businessmen gave Rs 100 crore worth of kickbacks to gain a favourable position in the Delhi excise policy for 2021-22 and out of these funds, Rs 45 crore was sent for AAP campaign in Goa during 2022 Assembly polls.

It said Kejriwal being the National convenor was ultimately responsible for the funds being used in the election expenses. *—PTI*

R'than Budget proposes ₹27K crore for health

JAIPUR, 10 JULY

Rajasthan Finance Minister Diya Kumari on Wednesday proposed Rs 27,000 crore for the health sector and Rs 15,000 crore to provide tap water to 25 lakh rural houses in the state Budget for FY25.

Presenting the full budget for the fiscal, she said four lakh vacancies will be filled in the next five years and a policy for youths will be framed.

Moreover, the budget proposed electricity connection to 2 lakh households, Rs 100 crore for corridor at Khatu Shyam temple, and formation of Rajasthan Tourism Development Board.

She said that for the first time, nine greenfield expressways will be built in the state and free tablets with internet will be provided to meritorious school students.

Kumari, addressing the media, who is also the Deputy Chief Minister in the BJP-led state, said the government has decided to work on 10 resolutions. *—PTI*

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma with Finance Minister Diya Kumari after presentation of the annual state Budget **PHOTO: PTI**

REJECTS CENTRE'S OBJECTION

WB's plea against CBI probe valid, says SC

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is under the superintendence of the Union government as per the statutory scheme, the Supreme Court held on Wednesday while rejecting the Centre's objection to the maintainability of a lawsuit by West Bengal contesting the federal agency's action of pressing ahead with investigation of cases in the state despite withdrawal of general consent.

West Bengal had withdrawn the general consent allowing the CBI to probe cases or conduct raids in the state on 16 November, 2018.

Referring to various provisions of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946, the top court said, "We further find that the very establishment, exercise of powers, extension of jurisdiction, the superintendence of the DSPE, all vest with the Government of India".

West Bengal had withdrawn the general consent allowing the CBI to probe cases or conduct raids in the state on 16 November, 2018 **PHOTO: PTI**

"In our view, the CBI is an organ or a body which is established by and which is under the superintendence of the Government of India in view of the statutory scheme as enacted by the DSPE Act," a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta said while ruling that the suit is maintainable. It said a perusal of the entire scheme would reveal that right from the constitution of the special police force, which is called DSPE, issuance of notifications specifying the offences or classes of offences which are to be investigated by it, superintendence and administration of DSPE and extension of powers and jurisdiction of DSPE to areas beyond the Union Territories, "it is the central government which is vitally concerned with". The bench considered the contention of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta with regard to the Union of India having no superintendence or control over the Central Bureau of Investigation. *—PTI*

- The bench considered the contention of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta with regard to the Union of India having no superintendence or over the CBI

India strategic partner despite Russian ties: US

WASHINGTON, 10 JULY

India will continue to be a strategic partner for the US despite concerns over its ties with Russia, the Biden Administration has said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Russia for two days for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit that has been watched closely by the West amidst the raging Ukraine conflict.

During his talks with Putin on Tuesday, Modi told Russian President Putin that a solution to the Ukraine conflict is not possible on the battlefield and peace efforts do not succeed amid bombs and bullets.

On Tuesday, spokespeople of the Pentagon and the State Department reacted separately to questions on India's relationship with Russia and Modi's visit to Moscow.

"India and Russia have had a relationship for a very long time. From a US perspective, India is a strategic partner with whom we continue to engage in full and frank dialogue to include their relationship with Russia. As it relates to the NATO summit being this week, of course, like you, the world is focused on that," Pentagon Press Secretary Major General Pat Ryder told reporters at a news confer

> **From a US perspective, India is a strategic partner with whom we continue to engage in full and frank dialogue to include their relationship with Russia**
>
> -Pat Ryder, Pentagon Press Secretary Major General

ence.

On the other hand, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters at his daily news conference that the US has been quite clear about its "concerns about India's relationship with Russia."

India has been stoutly defending its "special and privileged strategic partnership" with Russia and maintained the momentum in the ties notwithstanding the Ukraine conflict.

Ryder said: "I do not think anybody will be surprised if (Russian) President (Vladimir) Putin tries to represent this visit in a way that seeks to somehow show that he is not isolated from the rest of the world. And the fact of the matter is President Putin's war of choice has isolated Russia from the rest of the world, and it has come at great cost. *—PTI*

12 HOUR SHUTDOWN BRINGS MANIPUR TO HALT

IMPHAL/ CHURACHANDPUR, 10 JULY

Normal life was affected in at least four districts of Manipur due to a 12-hour "total shutdown" called by a major Kuki organisation of the north-eastern state to protest against the arrest of five people belonging to the community.

Markets, educational institutions and banks remained closed in Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Pherzawl and Tengnoupal districts, owing to the 6am to 6pm strike call by Kuki Inpi.

Government offices also recorded thin attendance, they said. Security was heightened in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi to ensure that no untoward incidents occur, the sources said.

Meanwhile, the recent arrest of two people in Jiribam and three others in Kangpokpi "poses a significant security threat" for them, Kuki Inpi said. Ethnic violence in Manipur since May last year has resulted in the death of over 200 people, while thousands have been rendered homeless. *—PTI*

An Indian army helicopter near the site of a recent terrorist attack, in Kathua district, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Manhunt on in Kathua; truck driver, 50 detained

JAMMU, 10 JULY

The manhunt for the terrorists responsible for the ambush in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, which resulted in the tragic death of five army personnel, has led to the detention of a truck driver and 50 others for questioning, officials said on Wednesday.

According to officials, the truck, which was initially close behind the ill-fated army vehicles on the Machedi-Kindli-Malhar mountainous road, slowed down near Badnota village in Lohai Malhar when the terrorists opened fire from two different directions. Five army personnel including a Junior Commissioner Officer, were killed in the ambush on Monday.

The jawans of the 22 Garhwal regiment fired more than 5,100 rounds to protect their injured colleagues and forced the terrorists to retreat into Kathua's wooded hills, officials said. The search operation by the army and police is underway amid intermittent heavy rain in dense forests across four districts, besides Kathua. It was launched from three different areas -- Kathua, Udhampur and Bhaderwah, official said.

- In a related development, a search operation is underway in the higher reaches of the Doda district following a gunfight between terrorists and security forces

A massive search operation, conducted by the army and police, is on amidst heavy rain in dense forests across four districts.

The operation, launched from Kathua, Udhampur, and Bhaderwah, has resulted in the detention of 50 individuals for questioning in connection with the ambush, the officials said. Efforts are being made to track down and neutralise the terrorists believed to be hiding in the forest, they said.

In a related development, a search operation is underway in the higher reaches of the Doda district following a gunfight between terrorists and security forces. *—PTI*

Cal HC to hear Guv's plea for order against CM

KOLKATA, 10 JULY

The Calcutta High Court will hear on Monday an application for interim order by West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose in a defamation suit filed by him against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and some other TMC leaders.

The governor had filed a defamation case against Banerjee on 28 June, a day after she claimed women complained to her that they were afraid to visit the Raj Bhavan.

Justice Krishna Rao on Wednesday granted leave for the defamation plaint to be registered before his court. He directed that Bose's application for an interim order, for a direction upon Banerjee and the others not to make any further comment on the issue under contention, will be taken up for hearing on Monday.

Justice Rao also directed Bose's lawyer to serve copies of the application to the defendants in the suit in the meantime. Banerjee had on 27 June said "women have

PHOTO: PTI

informed me they are afraid to visit Raj Bhavan due to recent incidents reported there".

Legal battle, can't pursue Guv rape case, says dancer

The Odissi dancer who had lodged complaints against Governor CV Ananda Bose and his nephew accusing them of sexual assault, has denied reports that she wanted to withdraw the case. She clarified that she rather did not want to "pursue" the case because of a legal battle in the US, which was taking a toll on her health. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

My phone hacked by Pegasus: Iltija

SRINAGAR, 10 JULY

PDP President Mehbooba Mufti's daughter and her media advisor, Iltija Mufti, on Wednesday alleged that her phone has been hacked by the Pegasus spyware.

"Got an Apple alert that my phone's been hacked by Pegasus Indian government has admittedly procured & weaponised to harass critics & political opponents," Iltija Mufti said on X.She also accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of snooping on women leaders who do not "toe their line". *—PTI*

SC collegium suggests 3 permanent judges

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

The Supreme Court collegium headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud has recommended to the Centre the names of three additional judges of the Delhi High Court for appointment as permanent judges.

The collegium recommended that seven additional judges of the Bombay High Court be appointed as permanent judges. It also recommended that Justices Sanjay Anandrao Deshmukh and Vrushali Vijay Joshi be appointed as additional judges of the Bombay High Court for one year with effect from 7 October 2024.

"In view of the above, the collegium resolves to recommend that Justices Girish Kathpalia, Manoj Jain and Dharmesh Sharma, additional judges, be appointed as permanent judges of the High Court of Delhi against the existing vacancies," said one of the collegium resolutions. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

108 kg of smuggled gold seized near Indo-China border

LEH, 10 JULY

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has seized 108 gold bars, each weighing one kilogram, near Indo-China border and arrested three people, an official of the border guarding force said. Besides the huge quantity of smuggled gold, the seizure also included two mobile phones, a binocular, two knives and several Chinese food items like cakes and milk, the official said. "This is the biggest haul of gold recovered by ITBP in its history. The seized material will be handed over to the customs department," he said. The official said the troops of 21st battalion ITBP launched a long range patrolling on Tuesday afternoon in the Changthang sub-sector in eastern Ladakh, including Chizbule, Narbula, Zangle and Zakla to check infiltration of smugglers as the smuggling activities are heightened around the summer season. *—PTI*

MP: 5 killed, 6 injured as MUV collides with tree

NARMADAPURAM, 10 JULY

Five persons in their twenties were killed and six others injured when their multi-utility vehicle (MUV) collided with a tree in the wee hours of Wednesday in Narmadapuram district of Madhya Pradesh, a police official said. The accident occurred near Pachlavara village when the victims were returning to Pipariya town in the district after attending a marriage function in Sadia village, he said. The deceased were identified as Sovit Rajput, 20, Aman Malviya, 21, Pradumya Agrawal, 22, Mayank Chourasia, 22, and Shreyansh Jain, 23, Pipariya police station's Assistant Sub Inspector Ganesh Rai said. The six injured persons were referred to the Narmadapuram district hospital, he said, adding that a case was registered. *—PTI*

Quake in parts of M'rashtra, govt says do not panic

MUMBAI, 10 JULY

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said an earthquake which impacted parts of the state on Wednesday was mild, and appealed to people to stay alert and not panic as the administration was taking all precautionary steps. Making a statement in the legislative Assembly, Pawar said an earthquake of 4.5 magnitude was experienced at 7.14 am in Hingoli, Parbhani, Beed, Jalna, Nanded, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar districts in Marathwada, and Washim and nearby areas in the Vidarbha region. Its epicentre was at Rameshwar Panda village in Kalamnuri taluka of Hingoli district, he said. The tremors were mild, he said adding there was no report of any casualty so far. *—PTI*

Baby elephant falls into well, mother comes to the rescue

KOCHI, 10 JULY

A baby elephant that fell into a well in a village adjacent to a forest area in Ernakulam district was rescued by its mother on Wednesday, police said here. The incident occurred on a private property in the Illithode area of Malayattoor. Visuals aired by news channels showed the mother elephant rescuing its baby from the well and reuniting with the herd of wild elephants waiting nearby. The police said that the baby elephant had fallen into the well in the morning and the herd remained in the vicinity. When local residents, police, and forest officials surrounded the area, the mother elephant stepped forward and lifted her baby out of the well. After the successful rescue, the herd of wild elephants returned to the forest. *—PTI*

Farmers' stir: HC tells govt to open Shambhu border

Farmers have been camping at the border since 13 February

CHANDIGARH, 10 JULY

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Wednesday directed the Haryana government to remove within a week barricades set up at the Shambhu border near Ambala, where farmers have been camping since 13 February in support of their demands.

The Haryana government had set up barricades at the Ambala-New Delhi national highway in February when the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha had announced their decision to move towards Delhi in support of various demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP for crops.

The directions came on a petition filed against the sealing of border between Punjab and Haryana. Speaking to reporters here, Haryana Additional Advocate General Deepak Sabharwal said the court has directed the Haryana government to remove barricading within seven days.

The court also said if any law and order situation arises, it can take preventive action as per law. The Punjab government has also been told that if there is any barricading at their side, it should also be removed, he said.

Sabharwal said barricades were set up on 10 February to maintain law and order. SKM (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha have been spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march by farmers to press the government to accept their demands. The farmers have been staying put at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since 13 February when their march was stopped by the security forces. However, the number of farmers camping at the site has gradually declined. *—PTI*

Haryana government set up barricades at Ambala-New Delhi National Highway in February to keep the farmers in check PHOTO: PTI

TRAIN PLOWS INTO ELEPHANT

People gather near the carcass of an elephant after it was hit by a train at Jagiroad, in Morigaon district, on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

BMW HIT-AND-RUN

An illegal portion of Global Tapas Bar that served alcohol to hit-and-run accused being demolished in Mumbai on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

BMC razes part of bar that served alcohol to accused

MUMBAI, 10 JULY

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is demolishing unauthorised alterations made at the city-based bar that was visited by the main accused in the BMW hit-and-run case hours before he allegedly took the wheel of the car involved in the crash that killed a woman, officials said.

The establishment - Vice-Global Tapas Bar - against which the action was being taken, is located in Juhu suburb. The BMW car driven by main accused Mihir Shah allegedly rammed into a two-wheeler from behind in Worli area of south-central Mumbai on Sunday morning, resulting in the death of Kaveri Nakhwa, 45, who was riding pillion, while her husband Pradeep survived with injuries, police have said.

According to them, Nakhwa was dragged for around 1.5 km by the speeding car before Mihir pulled it over, swapped the seat with his driver, and fled in another vehicle. Shah was arrested on Tuesday.

The civic body had conducted an inspection of the bar on Tuesday to check if any unauthorised additions and alterations were made there. Detailed measurements were taken at the bar during the inspection, the official said.

- According to them, Nakhwa was dragged for around 1.5 km by the speeding car before Mihir pulled it over, swapped the seat with his driver, and fled in another vehicle

Key accused sent to police custody till 16 July

A court remanded Mihir Shah, the prime accused in the BMW hit-and-run case, in police custody till 16 July.

Amid mounting criticism, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who heads the Shiv Sena, on Wednesday sacked Rajesh Shah, whose son Mihir Shah was allegedly involved in the BMW hit-and-run, as the party's deputy leader. *—PTI*

Car knocks down woman in Nashik; driver arrested

NASHIK, 10 JULY

In yet another hit-and-run case in Maharashtra, a 31-year-old woman was killed after a speeding car knocked her down in Nashik city, police said on Wednesday.

The 51-year-old car driver, who was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident on Tuesday evening and fled from the spot, was later arrested, they said. The accused Devchand Rambhau Tidme, resident of Dhruv Nagar worked at a company in Satpur MIDC area here, an official said. The victim, Archana Kishore Shinde, was walking after work when the car hit her from behind. *—PTI*

Assam flood waters recede; death toll reaches 79

GUWAHATI, 10 JULY

The flood situation in Assam improved marginally on Wednesday with water levels of major rivers showing a receding trend, reducing the affected population to 1.7 million across 26 districts, according to an official bulletin. The death toll in this year's floods, landslides and storms increased to 92 with 79 people losing their lives to the deluge alone.

Vast tracts of land, however, remain inundated with sporadic rainfall reported from several districts.

Seven deaths were reported on Tuesday. An area of 38,870.3 hectares of cropland was still inundated as against 49,014.06 hectares on Monday. A total of 48,021 affected people have taken shelter in 507 relief camps while relief materials have been distributed to 104,665 others outside these camps.

Urban flooding was reported from two districts of Kamrup (Metropolitan), Dibrugarh and Karbi Anglong. Kaziranga National Park has seen its worst floods in recent years, resulting in the death of 159 wild animals due to drowning or during rescue operations, while 133 others have been saved.

As many as 159 wild animals, including nine rhinos, have died so far at Kaziranga National Park due to floods in Assam. "Out of 159 wild animals, 128 hog deer, 9 rhinos, 2 swamp deer and 2 sambar died after drowning in flood waters. On the other hand, 12 hog deer, one swamp deer, rhesus macaque, and otter-pup died under care," Sonali Ghosh said. *—PTI/ANI*

Child from Indore ashram missing; mgmt says abduction

INDORE, 10 JULY

A 16-year-old boy from an Indore-based ashram, where six children died recently, has gone missing, prompting its management to lodge a complaint claiming that the minor was mentally-weak and was kidnapped by an unidentified person, police said on Wednesday.

Six children lost their lives at the Shri Yugpurush Dham Bal Ashram, operated by an NGO in Malharganj area of Indore within a span of a few days starting 29 June. The deaths raised concerns over mismanagement, over-admission and a suspected cholera outbreak at the shelter for special children.

"An FIR was registered at Tejaji Nagar police station on the basis of a complaint lodged by the management of Shri Yugpurush Dham Bal Ashram that one of the children, Anand (16), was lured by some unidentified miscreant and kidnapped on 8 July," he said.

The ACP said the police did not find the boy in the footage dated 8 July captured by CCTV cameras installed in and around the spot. "We are also examining CCTV footage prior to that date," he added.

According to the ashram management, the missing boy is mentally-weak and he was sent to Indore by the Child Welfare Committee of Harda in January, Patel said. *—PTI*

Upset over birth of girls, man buries newborns

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Desperate for a son, a 32-year-old man allegedly killed his three-day-old twin daughters and buried them near his house in outer Delhi's Sultanpuri area, police said on Wednesday. Neeraj Solanki was arrested from Rohtak in Haryana.

The bodies of the infants were found on the premises of a makeshift crematorium near Pooth Kalan village by locals, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Amit Goel said. Solanki, a graduate from the Delhi University, had killed his daughters on 3 June, he said.

The bodies were exhumed on 5 June, after getting permission from a court, and kept at the mortuary of the SGM Hospital in Mangolpuri for postmortem, Goel said. Solanki allegedly killed his three-day-old daughters as he wanted a son, the DCP said and added that they were born at a private hospital in Haryana.

The police officer said Solanki brought the infants to Delhi by lying to his wife that they had died from an illness. The babies, who were alive on reaching Delhi, were killed and buried at the crematorium, Goel said. *—PTI*

Patanjali asked to deposit ₹50L for breach of HC order

MUMBAI, 10 JULY

The Bombay High Court has directed Patanjali Ayurved to deposit Rs 50 lakh for alleged breach of the HC's interim order restraining it from selling its camphor products, in relation to a trademark infringement case filed by another company.

Following trademark infringement allegations by Mangalam Organics Ltd, the HC in an interim order in August 2023 restrained Patanjali Ayurved Ltd from selling its camphor products.

A single bench of Justice RI Chagla on 8 July noted that Patanjali, in an affidavit submitted in June, admitted breach of the earlier order granting injunction against sale of the impugned camphor products.

The bench said it would be appropriate to direct Patanjali to deposit a sum of Rs 50 lakh prior to passing of an order for contempt/breach of the injunction order.

Mangalam Organics had filed a suit against Patanjali Ayurved, alleging copyright infringement of their camphor products. It later filed an application, claiming Patanjali was in breach of the interim order as it continued selling camphor products. *—PTI*

SC stays Gujarat HC order on taking back land given to Adani Group

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed a Gujarat High Court order asking the state government to complete the process of taking back nearly 108 hectares of grazing land given to an Adani Group entity near the Mundra port in 2005.

A bench of justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan took note of the appeal of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) that the impugned order is required to be stayed in the interest of justice.

"Issue notice. Stay of impugned order," the bench said. On 5 July, the state government had informed the high court that it will take back nearly 108 hectares of 'gauchar' (grazing) land which was given to an Adani Group entity in 2005.

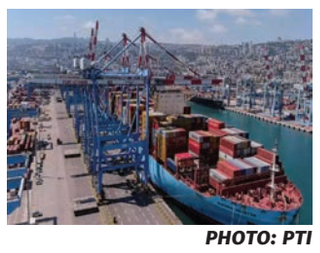


PHOTO: PTI

"Taking note of the affidavit of the Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Revenue, State of Gujarat, we require the concerned authority/officers to complete the process of resumption in accordance with law," the high court had ordered and posted the matter for 26 July.

In 2014, the high court had disposed of the PIL after the state government said in its affidavit that the deputy collector had passed an order granting additional 387 hectares of government land for the purpose of grazing. However, when it did not happen, a contempt petition was filed in the high court. *—PTI*

HISTORIC DECISION

Finmin allows senior woman IRS officer to change name, gender

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

In a landmark decision, the Finance Ministry has approved a request of a senior woman Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer to change her name and gender in all official records.

The request was made by M Anusuya, a 2013 batch IRS (Customs & Indirect Taxes) officer, currently serving as Joint Commissioner in the office of the Chief Commissioner of the Customs, Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT) in Hyderabad.

IRS officer M Anukathir Surya PHOTO: LINKEDIN

She requested her name to be changed to M Anukathir Surya and her gender from female to male. As per an office order dated 9 July, 2024, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has said the authority considered her request and "henceforth the officer will be recognised as Mr Anukathir Surya in all official records."

The order was issued with approval of competent authority, it said. Surya started his career as an assistant commissioner in Chennai in December 2013 and was promoted to Deputy Commissioner in 2018. He joined his current posting in Hyderabad last year, as per his LinkedIn profile. *—PTI*

'Prosecuting persons won't resolve issue of child marriages'

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Prosecuting persons involved in child marriages will not resolve the problem which has social dimensions, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while reserving the verdict on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) over the alleged rise in underage weddings in the country. Unimpressed by the Centre's submissions that state-specific programmes like awareness campaigns and training are being undertaken, the top court said "These programmes, lectures do not really change things on the ground". *—PTI*

Meghalaya to include QR codes in school textbooks

SHILLONG, 10 JULY

The Meghalaya government is set to integrate QR codes into school textbooks, allowing students to access additional information using smartphones, a senior official said on Wednesday.

According to Education Secretary A Marak, this initiative aims to enhance students' time management skills and empower them with supplementary knowledge options.

"We are adding quick response (QR) codes to school textbooks that will be embedded with additional information on a particular subject. The aim is to reinforce students' ability to manage time well and gain further knowledge as per one's choice," Marak said.

"By scanning QR codes with mobile devices, students can access educational apps featuring video lessons and solved question papers, thereby reducing the time spent searching for study materials and enabling greater focus on learning," he said.

Director of the Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT), R Manner, emphasised the benefits of QR codes embedded in specific textbooks, noting their potential to significantly aid students seeking self-improvement in particular subjects. *—PTI*

KENZA LAYLI 'MISS AI'

Kenza Layli, a 'Moroccan activist and influencer' is crowned world's first ever 'Miss AI' at the World AI Creator Awards hosted by the online platform named Fanvue on 9 July. She earned price money worth $20,000 for her creator Meriam Bessa. Layli promoted the Moroccan culture, women empowerment and AI-human collaboration

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM /@ KENZA.LAYLI

We never wanted them: Russia on Indians in Army

Experts say the number of Indians in the Russian army is insignificant in context of the conflict

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Russia on Wednesday said it is hoping for quick resolution of the issue relating to India's call for return of Indians recruited into the Russian Army as support staff and asserted their recruitment was purely a commercial matter.

In first comments on the issue from the Russian government, Russia's Charge d'affaires Roman Babushkin said Moscow never wanted the Indians to be part of its Army and their number is insignificant in the context of conflict.

"We are on the same side with the Indian government on the issue... We hope that the issue will be resolved soon," he said at a media briefing while responding to a question.

Babushkin's remarks came a day after Russia promised to ensure early release and return to home of the Indian nationals working in the Russian military as support staff after Prime Minister Narendra Modi "very strongly" raised the issue with President Vladimir Putin.

"Let us be very clear, we have never wanted Indians to be part of the Russian Army. You would never see any announcement by Russian authorities on this," he said.

The Russian diplomat said most of the Indians were recruited under a commercial framework as they wanted to "make money".

The number of Indians -- 50, 60 or 100 people -- does not make any significance in terms of the wider conflict.

"They are there purely for commercial reasons and we did not want to recruit them," he said.

Babushkin said most of the Indians recruited as support staff are working illegally as they do not have appropriate visas to work.

He said most of them came to Russia on tourist visas.

Asked if the families of those killed would be given compensation and Russian citizenship, Babushkin said that it "should happen anyway as per the contractual obligations".

On Tuesday, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said in Moscow that the Russian side promised early discharge of all Indian nationals from service of the Russian Army.

"The prime minister strongly raised the issue of early discharge of Indian nationals who have been misled into the service of the Russian Army. This was taken up strongly by the prime minister and the Russian side promised early discharge of all Indian nationals," he said.

It is learnt that Modi raised the issue during his informal talks with Putin over dinner at the Russian leader's dacha or country home on Monday evening.

Kwatra said the two sides will work on how expeditiously the Indians can be brought back home.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the issue of Indian nationals serving with the Russian Army remains a matter of "utmost concern" and demanded action from Moscow over it.

On 11 June, India said two Indian nationals, who were recruited by the Russian Army, had recently been killed in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which took the number of such deaths to four.

Following the deaths of two Indians, the MEA demanded a "verified stop" to further recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army.

In a strongly-worded statement, it said India demanded that there be a "verified stop to any further recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army and that such activities would not be in "consonance with our partnership".

In March, 30-year-old Hyderabad resident Mohammed Asfan succumbed to injuries sustained while serving with Russian troops on the frontlines with Ukraine.

Modi was on a two-day high-profile visit to Russia from Monday to hold the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with Putin. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

What do we know about new Covid variant FLuQE?

We're in the midst of a bad cold and flu season in Australia. Along with the usual viral suspects, such as influenza, RSV, and rhinoviruses (which cause the common cold), bacterial pathogens are also causing significant rates of illness, particularly in children. These include Bordatella pertussis (whooping cough) and Mycoplasma pneumoniae.

Meanwhile, SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes Covid) is responsible for recurring waves of infection as it continues to evolve and mutate into new variants which keep it a step ahead of our immunity.

The latest variant is nicknamed "FLuQE", and is reportedly gaining traction in Australia and other countries. So what is there to know about FLuQE?

From FLiRT to FLuQE

In recent months, you may have heard of the "FLiRT" subvariants. These are decedents of the Omicron variant JN.1, including KP.1.1, KP.2 and JN.1.7.

KP.2, in particular, significantly contributed to Covid infections in Australia and elsewhere around May.

The name FLiRT refers to the amino acid substitutions in the spike protein (F456L, V1104L and R346T). Amino acids are the molecular building blocks of proteins, and the spike protein is the protein on the surface of SARS-CoV-2 which allows it to attach to our cells. These changes in the spike protein arise from mutation – random changes in the genetic code of the virus.

FLiRT mutations seem to reduce the ability of neutralising antibodies to bind to the spike protein, potentially enabling the virus to better evade our immunity. But at the same time, it appears the immune pressure which has selected for these mutations may have affected the ability of the virus to bind to our cells.

These findings are yet to be peer-reviewed (independently verified by other researchers). However, they suggest the FLiRT variants may have traded in some ability to infect our cells for a spike protein that's more resistant to our immune system.

According to experts in Australia and internationally, what appears to have occurred with FLuQE is an additional mutation has restored fitness that may have been lost with the FLiRT mutations.

FLuQE (KP.3) is a direct descendant of FLiRT, meaning it has inherited the same mutations as the FLiRT variants. But it has an additional amino acid change in the spike protein, Q493E (giving FLuQE its name).

It's still early days for FLuQE and we don't have peer-reviewed research on this yet. But it appears we now have (another) immune evasive virus that is also well adapted to infecting our cells. It's no surprise, then, that FLuQE seems to be becoming dominant in many countries.

What next?

We would expect with widespread transmission of and infection with FLiRT and FLuQE variants, population immunity to these variants will mature, and in time, their dominance will be supplanted by the next immune-evasive variant.

The tug of war between our immune system and SARS-CoV-2 evolution continues. The issue we are dealing with now is vaccines don't sufficiently protect from infection or suppress virus transmission. While they're very good at protecting against severe disease, the virus still infects lots of people.

As well as the burden on people and health care, lots of infections means more opportunities for the virus to evolve. The more "rolls of the dice" the virus has to find a mutation that helps it evade our immune system and infect our cells, the more likely it is to do so.

Next-generation vaccines and therapies really need to boost immunity in the upper respiratory tract (nose and throat) to reduce infection and transmission. This is where infection initiates. A human challenge study, where volunteers are experimentally exposed to SARS-CoV-2, showed people who didn't become infected had a robust anti-viral immune response in their upper respiratory tract.

To this end, there are immune-stimulating nasal sprays and nasal vaccines in clinical development. The hope is this approach will slow down the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 and the emergence of new subvariants that continue to drive waves of infection and disease.

Fortunately, so far these mutations have not generated a virus that is obviously more pathogenic (causes worse disease), but there are no guarantees this won't happen in the future.

—PTI

SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes Covid) is responsible for recurring waves of infection as it continues to evolve and mutate into new variants

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gautam Gambhir's journey from feisty batter to tactical coach

Gautam Gambir has framed his muddy 2011 World Cup t-shirt in his home. At 42, he is all set to be the youngest head coach in the history of Indian cricket team

PHOTO: X/FACEBOOK

At 42, Gautam Gambhir, is the youngest head coach in the history of the Indian cricket team.

He succeeds Rahul Dravid whose tenure finished with the recently concluded T20 World Cup.

Dravid declined an extension to spend more time with his family. VVS Laxman, his former batting partner, was initially favoured but opted to stay at National Cricket Academy. This cleared the path for a new face, resulting in an uncontested selection.

Some unexpected developments in the past six-seven months had fast-tracked Gambhir's candidature.

Last November, he unexpectedly resigned as mentor of IPL franchise Lucknow Super Giants after guiding them to the knockout stages in two previous seasons. Instead, he reunited with his former IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), where he had previously led them to titles in 2012 and 2014 as a captain.

In March, Gambhir, who joined ruling BJP after retiring from cricket in 2018 and was elected MP for East Delhi in the 2019 general election, informed BJP leadership of his decision to leave politics to fully dedicate himself to cricket once again.

However, his credentials to be head coach of the national team received tepid attention until KKR hit a purple patch winning several matches on the trot and turned the focus on him.

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announces a call for applications through the media, inviting candidates from India or abroad who meet specific eligibility criteria (like played 30 Tests or 50 ODIs, under 60 years old).

Applications are reviewed by Board's Advisory Committee (CAC). Shortlisted candidates are then invited for one-on-one interviews to present their vision for advancing Indian cricket.

The candidate who puts forward the most impressive strategies and processes is picked for the job.

In Gambhir's case, the absence of any rival made the task of CAC a no-brainer.

After BCCI's notice seeking applications for the post, stories about some overseas coaches being approached informally (likely self-instigated) began swirling around, but died a quick death.

Unlike in the past, when an overseas coach was sought to counter factionalism, favouritism, and parochialism in Indian cricket, today's preference is for an Indian coach who better understands the country's ethos, culture, and psychology.

Former India opener W Raman, who has coached Indian women's team, did express interest in taking up the assignment. His CV was impressive, but at 59, he perhaps sensed he didn't have time on his side to build up a three-year game-plan that would get a buy-in from BCCI and held back.

Gambhir's successful mentorship of KKR to an IPL triumph made him frontrunner. With Dravid's firm stance during T20 World Cup that he wouldn't continue, his appointment became inevitable.

His appointment isn't without merit though. Beyond his IPL success, he has impressive credentials as an India player. A stylish left-handed batsman, he debuted in 2003 and is one of India's most accomplished openers with stellar performances across all formats.

In 2012, after India had lost 0-4 to Australia in a Test series, Gambhir was projected to succeed MS Dhoni as captain, but missed out after Board President vetoed the selectors. Feisty and blunt, Gambhir's intense, unsmiling demeanour has often led critics to see him as unapproachable.

On his part, Gambhir claims he decries the focus on stars rather than star performances in Indian cricket. He believes the brand value of a few players shouldn't overshadow the intrinsic betterment of Indian cricket.

The head coach of India is among the most coveted jobs in the sport, guaranteeing, apart from enormous prestige and power, a lip-smacking pay package in excess of $1m per year plus bonuses. But in a cricket-crazy country, this does not come without great burden of responsibility and humongous pressure of expectation, more so now after the huge successful tenures of his predecessors Rahul Dravid, and before him, Ravi Shastri.

For the next three years, India has a busy calendar - it will participate in the Champions Trophy this year, World Test Championship next year, T20 World Cup in 2026 and ODI World Cup in 2027, along with bilateral assignments.

Gambhir must manage dressing room superstars, oversee generational transitions, and implement changes in mindset, strategies, and skills to maintain and enhance India's position in cricket.

Being head coach is a prestigious role, but Gambhir has a formidable task. *—BBC News*

PHOTO: PTI

UAE deports student who yelled 'Free Palestine'

AMMAN, 10 JULY

A university student wearing the traditional Palestinian black-and-white keffiyeh scarf who shouted "Free Palestine!" as he crossed the stage to receive his diploma was reportedly deported from the United Arab Emirates. The incident at the graduation comes as the UAE tries to balance its diplomatic recognition of Israel with the ongoing Israel-Hamas war that's devastated the Gaza Strip. While offering aid to the Palestinians, there have been none of the mass demonstrations that swept the Arab world here in the UAE, a federation of seven emirates that tightly controls speech and where political parties are illegal. *—AP*

Regular flights between Syria and Saudi resume

DAMASCUS, 10 JULY

Regular flights between the Syrian capital of Damascus and Saudi Arabia resumed Wednesday for the first time in more than a decade as part of a thaw in relations between the countries. Syria and Saudi Arabia had severed ties in 2012 over President Bashar Assad's brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters at the start of the civil war. Syria's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ayman Soussan, said the resumption of flights was "an additional step in the process of development in relations between the two brotherly countries". Syria's 13-year civil war is now largely frozen, with the central government in Damascus having reasserted control over most of the territory, while much of the northwest is still controlled by opposition groups and the northeast by Kurdish forces. *—Courtesy, Arab News*

Lanka Railway Union strike affects thousands

COLOMBO, 10 JULY

A railway union strike stopped most trains across Sri Lanka on Wednesday, leaving tens of thousands of passengers to brave the few dangerously overcrowded trains that kept running or be stranded at the station. The Station Masters' Union launched the strike to demand that vacancies be filled and other administrative issues be resolved. Hundreds of scheduled train journeys were cancelled Wednesday due to the strike, leaving the very few trains that ran jam-packed with passengers. Local TV stations showed people risking their lives to get to school and work, barely hanging on to the sides of the train while balancing on footboards made slippery by the rain. *—PTI*

130 stranded in Tibet after rains cause landslides

BEIJING, 10 JULY

Rescue efforts were underway Wednesday for more than 130 people including some tourists who were trapped in a mountainous town in China's Tibet region after heavy rains and flooding washed away sections of a provincial highway. Those trapped also included migrant workers and business people, according to state broadcaster. Another 342 stranded people had been relocated earlier to nearby towns. Steady rain since Saturday blocked roads, and the surging waters of the Nadang river caused severe landslides and mudslides. Power and communication was cut off from Chengtang town, but emergency communication was later restored. The broadcaster reported that people were trapped because of road damage, the rainfall and a "lack of physical strength" after long-distance hiking. *—AP*

NATO allies pledge air defence aid to Kyiv

The assistance to Ukraine includes at least four of powerful Patriot systems

WASHINGTON, 10 JULY

The US and an array of other NATO allies will send Ukraine dozens of air-defence systems in the coming months, including at least four of the powerful Patriot systems that Kyiv has been desperately seeking to help fight off Russian advances in the war, according to a new joint agreement.

US President Joe Biden announced the broader commitment when he spoke on Tuesday at the opening of the NATO summit in Washington.

According to the statement, the US, Germany and Romania will send Ukraine additional Patriot batteries, while the Netherlands and others will provide Patriot components to make up one more battery. Italy will provide a SAMP-T air-defence system.

The allies, including Canada, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom, will provide a number of other systems that will help Ukraine expand its coverage *PHOTO: PTI*

Other allies, including Canada, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom, will provide a number of other systems that will help Ukraine expand its coverage. Those systems include NASAMS, HAWKs, IRIS T-SLM, IRIS T-SLS and Gepards. And other nations have agreed to provide munitions for those systems.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in a social media post on Tuesday, made it clear that air defence is still his country's key request, and he has repeatedly asked for more Patriot systems. *—AP*

US President Joe Biden *PHOTO: PTI*

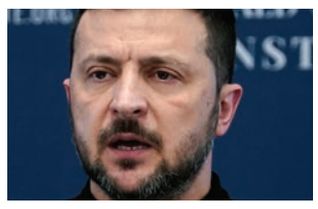
BIDEN PLEDGES NATO SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

WASHINGTON DC, 10 JULY

US President Joe Biden pledged support of the NATO to defend Ukraine against Russian President Vladimir Putin's "war of aggression." "Putin wants nothing less -- nothing less than Ukraine's total subjugation; to end Ukraine's democracy; to destroy Ukraine's culture; and to wipe Ukraine off the map," Biden said in his welcome address at the opening of the three-day NATO summit in Washington DC on Tuesday. "Ukraine can and will stop Putin," Biden, 81, said to applause. *—ANI*

Can't wait till US polls to repel Putin: Zelenskyy

WASHINGTON, 10 JULY



Volodymyr Zelenskyy *PHOTO: PTI*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the world must not wait for November to drive back Russia's offensive against his country.

Zelenskyy made the remarks while attending this week's summit of NATO leaders in Washington.

He said the world was waiting to see what would happen in November, when voters are expected to decide between incumbent President Joe Biden and Republican opponent Donald Trump. But he said there needed to be action before then to defeat Russian President Vladimir Putin in his war against Ukraine.

Zelenskyy has proven to be an adept navigator of international relations in defence of his war-ravaged country, publicly cajoling and sometimes loudly complaining to get the military assistance it needs to defend itself against Russia's invasion.

But, as he attends the NATO summit, his most coveted prize -- membership in the military alliance -- remains elusive. The European and North American countries making up NATO are in no hurry to admit Ukraine, especially while it is engaged in active hostilities with Russia that could drag them into a broader war.

Zelenskyy, who was feted as a champion of democracy in Washington in the aftermath of Russia's 2022 invasion but was forced to plead his case for aid to US lawmakers just last year, will find himself once again in the American capital as bridesmaid. *—AP*

Evacuate Gaza City: Israel to Palestinians

GAZA, 10 JULY

The Israeli military said Wednesday it has ordered the evacuation of Gaza City, which was an early target of the war that is now seeing renewed fighting.

The military dropped leaflets on the city, calling on people to head south and saying "Gaza City will remain a dangerous combat zone."

The evacuation order could signal that Israel is expanding an incursion into the city, where it has been operating in several outlying neighbourhoods in recent days.

It was the latest sign that Hamas is regrouping in areas that Israel previously said it had cleared of militants.

The evacuation order came as US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators were meeting with Israeli officials in the Qatari capital, Doha, for talks trying to push through a long elusive cease-fire deal. Israel says it is pursuing Hamas fighters regrouping in various parts of Gaza nine months into the military's devastating campaign of airstrikes and ground offensives. But the heavy strikes the length of the territory also could be aimed at hiking up pressure on Hamas in the cease-fire efforts.

PHOTO: PTI

Israel ordered residents of northern Gaza, to flee south months ago as it operated in the area. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have remained in the hard-hit north, and many Palestinians say they have nowhere to go. Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people are crammed into squalid tent camps in central and southern Gaza. *—PTI*

ISRAEL AIR STRIKES KILL 29 AT GAZA CAMP

GAZA, 10 JULY

At least 29 Palestinians have been killed and dozens wounded in an Israeli air strike on a camp for displaced people outside a school in southern Gaza, hospital officials say.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said the strike had hit next to the gate of al-Awda school in the town of Abasan al-Kabira, east of the city of Khan Younis.

The Israeli military said it had used "precise munition" to target a "terrorist from Hamas' military wing" who, it said, had taken part in the 7 October attack on Israel.

It said it was "looking into the reports that civilians were harmed" adjacent to al-Awda school, which houses displaced people from the eastern villages of Khan Younis.

The incident comes a week after the Israeli military ordered civilians to evacuate Abasan al-Kabira and other areas of eastern Khan Younis, prompting tens of thousands to flee. *—BBC News*

US PREZ ELECTIONS

Trump hints at Marco Rubio as potential VP pick

DORAL, 10 JULY

Former US president Donald Trump repeatedly name-dropped Senator Marco Rubio throughout his rally here on Tuesday night, leaving the crowd in suspense over who he'd pick as running mate — while also seemingly toying with the vice presidential hopeful.

Trump pulled the rumours surrounding his running mate into the open early in his 75-minute speech. "They'll probably be thinking that I'll be announcing Rubio as my vice president," he said about the journalists gathered to cover the rally, "because that's a lot of press." Trump, who withheld naming his running mate, then moved on to a rant about President Joe Biden and the economy.

At another point in his speech, Trump asked the Florida Republican Senator whether he'd support his proposal to remove taxes from tips before teasing the senator with, "you may or not be there to vote for it — but you'll be involved." He later talked about his closeness to Rubio, acknowledging that during the 2016 presidential race "we had a vicious campaign for a while," before introducing all the members of the Florida GOP congressional delegation and state lawmakers who attended. It is, in a way, classic Trump: trying to drum up drama for the sake of attention. *—Courtesy, The Politico*

Senator Marco Rubio *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Kamala insurance policy for Biden: Trump

WASHINGTON, 10 JULY

Donald Trump, the former US president and presumptive presidential nominee of the Republican Party, has attacked Vice President Kamala Harris, raising questions on her competence and describing her as an "insurance policy" for incumbent President Joe Biden. *—AP*

B'desh, China sign 21 agreements, as Hasina meets President Xi

BEIJING, 10 JULY

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met President Xi Jinping and her Chinese counterpart Li Qiang here on Wednesday as the two countries signed 21 agreements, MoUs and announced seven more projects to further elevate their strategic cooperative ties.

During the meetings, both countries agreed to elevate their "strategic partnership" to a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership," Bangladesh's state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) reported.

China will help Bangladesh economically in four ways by giving grants, interest-free loans, concessional loans and commercial loans, the Chinese President said during the bilateral meeting with Hasina, it said.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Bangladesh's State Minister at the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications & Information Technology posted a photo of the two leaders' meeting on X and said, "Hon'ble President of China, H E Mr Xi Jinping met and held a bilateral meeting with the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday."

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, China, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Foreign Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud briefed the newsmen about the outcome of the meeting between the two leaders and described it as: "A very successful discussion was held between the two leaders in a very cordial environment." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Pak court denies pre-arrest bail to Imran Khan

LAHORE, 10 JULY

A Pakistani court on Tuesday refused pre-arrest bail to former prime minister Imran Khan in three cases of 9 May riots and allowed police his custody for interrogation.

Khan was booked on the charges of abetment in attacks on Lahore Corps Commander House known as Jinnah House, Askari Tower, and Shadman police station on 9 May, 2023 following his arrest in a graft case. *—ANI*

Carla Bruni charged over 2007 funding scandal

LYON, 10 JULY

Former supermodel and French first lady Carla Bruni-Sarkozy was given preliminary charges Tuesday for involvement in alleged efforts to pressure a witness who accused ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy of receiving illegal campaign financing from Libya.

Bruni-Sarkozy was placed under judicial supervision on Tuesday, which included a ban on contact with all those involved in the proceedings with the exception of her husband, according to a judicial official not authorized to be publicly named when speaking about an ongoing investigation.

Preliminary charges against Bruni-Sarkozy include witness tampering and participation in a criminal association with an attempt to commit fraud in efforts to deceive magistrates investigating her husband on suspicion of receiving illegal funds during his 2007 presidential election campaign, the official said.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

After she was questioned by police in May, her lawyers said she provided 'useful clarifications and explanations.''The witness involved, Ziad Takieddine, is central to accusations that Sarkozy received millions in illegal payments from the regime of then-Libyan President Moammar Gadhafi. *—AP*

BRINGS LIFE TO STANDSTILL

Hurricane Beryl hammers Houston

HOUSTON, 10 JULY

Hurricane Beryl has plunged Houston into a state of turmoil, with widespread power outages, impassable streets and a community grappling with the aftermath of a devastating natural disaster.

With no power, phone connections, gas to run cars, cancelled flights and scorching heat, Houston, the fourth-largest city of the United States, has come to a standstill. More than 20 lakh homes and businesses are in the dark, battling sweltering temperatures exceeding 90 degrees Fahrenheit, with no relief from air-conditioning or fans.

Schools and businesses remain shuttered, unable to operate amid the power outage and widespread damage. Streets are flooded, trees lie scattered and leaky roofs add to the city's woes, creating scenes reminiscent of a disaster movie.

A vehicle is stranded in high waters on a flooded Allen Parkway in Houston, on Monday, after Beryl came ashore in Texas *PHOTO: PTI*

Mobile and internet services are spotty at best, complicating communication and making it difficult for residents to reach out for help or stay informed.

Acting Governor Dan Patrick spoke with President Joe Biden on the phone on Tuesday to request the declaration that will help speed up the recovery process with financial aid. Biden declared a federal disaster for half of Texas' counties to aid in storm recovery efforts, but signs of fuel shortages and disrupted services persist.

Despite the usual summer heat, the combination of extreme weather and humidity, compounded by power shortages, poses severe health risks, with heat index values forecasted to reach up to 106 degrees Fahrenheit. *—AP*

2 Singaporean Indians jailed for banking scam

SINGAPORE, 10 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

Two Indian origin Singaporean men were sentenced to jail for scamming victims in the United States through at least 50 companies, two of which received money through bank accounts, including transactions from China and the UAE.

Ishan Sharma, 34, was sentenced to four weeks' jail. He pleaded guilty to two charges under the Companies Act after instigating his friend Kandhiban Letchumanansamy, 36, into not exercising reasonable diligence when the latter was a director at both firms, The Straits Times reported.

Kandhiban was sentenced to a week's jail. He pleaded guilty to one charge under the same Act after he failed to exercise any supervision over the companies' affairs.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Matthew Choo told the court that the offender earned SGD 12,000 in total for his offences linked to the two companies that received more than USD 1 million from scam victims. *—AP*

Gold price jumps ₹400 per 10 grams; silver remains flat

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Gold price on Wednesday jumped by Rs 400 to Rs 75,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on the back of fresh buying from jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had closed at Rs 74,650 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver prices remained flat at Rs 94,400 per kg. In sarafa markets, the yellow metal was trading at Rs 75,050 per 10 grams, up by Rs 400 against the previous close, the association said. Traders said gold prices saw an uptrend due to rise in domestic demand. In the international markets, spot gold was trading higher at USD 2,380.50 per ounce, up USD 12.60 per ounce. Additionally, silver price was also up at USD 31.25 per ounce globally. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 2 paise to settle at 83.51 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 10 JULY

The rupee stayed range-bound and settled 2 paise lower at 83.51 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid rising crude oil prices overseas and selling in domestic equities. A softening American currency and inflow of foreign funds capped the fall in the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened flat at 83.49 against the dollar and moved in a close range of 83.48 to 83.53 during the session. The local unit finally settled at 83.51 (provisional) against the American currency, registering a loss of 2 paise from its previous close. The rupee had edged up 1 paisa to close at 83.49 against the dollar on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, eased 0.03 per cent to 104.77. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 314.46 crore, according to exchange data. *—PTI*

JSW Motor & Shell allies to enhance EV charging

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

JSW MG Motor India on Wednesday said it has tied up with Shell India to enhance public charging infrastructure for electric vehicles across the country. As per the partnership, JSW MG Motor India customers will be able to leverage Shell's wide fuel station network across the country for vehicle charging. As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Shell India will deploy CCS 50kW and 60kW DC fast chargers at various locations throughout India, bolstering the EV charging network and facilitating long-distance travel for EV users, JSW MG Motor said in a statement. The expansion of infrastructure will make EV fast-charging more convenient, accessible and enable EV customers to plan hassle-free long-distance journeys, he added. Shell India Markets Director Sanjay Varkey said the partnership aims to promote the widespread adoption of electric vehicles in the country by leveraging digital integration and customer-centric initiatives. *—PTI*

Govt fines Herox, two others for violation of norms

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

The corporate affairs ministry has slapped penalties on startup Herox Pvt Ltd and two individuals, who are part of the Munjal family, for violations of the significant beneficial owner norms. Fines totalling Rs 6 lakh have been slapped on Herox while penalties of Rs 1.5 lakh each have been imposed on Suman Kant Munjal and Akshay Munjal, according to an order issued on Tuesday. The company and the individuals violated the Significant Beneficial Owner (SBO) norms. Herox and the directors will file an appeal against the order, a statement said. Under Section 90 of the Companies Act, 2013, entities are required to disclose the SBO details. *—PTI*

MARKET SINKS AFTER RECORD HIGH LEVELS

Sensex tanks over 400 pts on profit booking

MUMBAI, 10 JULY

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under heavy selling pressure to sink below record high levels on Wednesday, tracking deep losses in metal, auto and IT stocks amid widespread profit booking after recent gains.

Rising uncertainty over interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve also added to the weak trend in domestic equities, traders said.

30-share BSE Sensex opened 129.72 points higher to hit a fresh all-time high of 80,481.36. However, the index soon tumbled 915.88 points or 1.13 per cent to trade at 79,435.76. It finally closed lower by 426.87 points or 0.53 per cent at 79,924.77.

NSE Nifty also hit its record 24,461.05 in opening deals but pared all gains to decline 291.4 points or 1.19 per cent to 24,141.80 intra-day. It dropped 108.75 points or 0.45 per cent to settle at 24,324.45.

In the Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra tanked over 6 per cent after the company cut the prices of its SUV models to boost demand.

Mahindra & Mahindra said its XUV700's fully-loaded AX7 range now starts at Rs 19.49 lakh, a price cut of over Rs 2 lakh.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, State Bank of India, JSW Steel, Tata Motors and Kotak Mahindra Bank were other losers.

On the other hand, Asian Paints, NTPC, Power Grid, Adani Ports and Bharti Airtel were the winners.

European markets were trading higher in the mid-session deals. US markets ended on a mixed note in the overnight trade on Tuesday. *—PTI*

EMCURE & BANSAL WIRE SHARES ZOOM IN DEBUT TRADE

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Shares of Emcure Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Wednesday listed with a premium of over 31 per cent against the issue price of Rs 1,008. The stock started the trade at Rs 1,325.05, up 31.45 per cent on both BSE and NSE.

Later, the company's stock zoomed 37.30 per cent to Rs 1,384 on BSE and 37.40 per cent to Rs 1,385 on NSE.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 25,546.24 crore.

Shares of steel wire manufacturer Bansal Wire Industries Ltd on Wednesday made their market debut with a premium of 39 per cent against the issue price of Rs 256.

The stock listed at Rs 352.05, reflecting a jump of 37.51 per cent on the BSE. It further zoomed 44 per cent to Rs 368.70. *—PTI*

India, Taiwan trade organic agri goods under new pact

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

An agreement between India and Taiwan to facilitate trade in organically-produced goods, including tea and medicinal plants, has come into force from 8 July, the commerce ministry said on Wednesday.

The mutual recognition agreement (MRA) will ease the export of organic products by avoiding dual certifications, thereby reducing compliance cost, simplifying compliance requirements by adhering to only one regulation and enhancing trade opportunities in the organic sector.

It said the pact will pave the way for export of major Indian organic products such as rice, processed food, green/black and herbal tea, medicinal plant products to Taiwan.

The implementing agencies for the MRA are India's Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and Taiwan's Agriculture and Food Agency.

"The MRA for organic products between India and Taiwan has been implemented w.e.f. July 8," it said in a statement.

The trade agreement came into force on 8 July PHOTO: PTI

- It said the pact will pave the way for export of major Indian organic products such as rice, processed food, green/black and herbal tea, medicinal plant products to Taiwan

Under the pact, agricultural products produced and handled organically in conformity with the National Programme for Organic Production and accompanied by relevant documents are allowed for sale in Taiwan as organically-produced, including display of the 'India Organic' logo.

"Similarly, agricultural products produced and handled organically in conformity with the Organic Agriculture Promotion Act and accompanied by an organic demonstration document (transaction certificate etc) issued by an accredited certification body under the Taiwanese regulation are allowed for sale in India as organically-produced, including display of the Taiwan Organic logo," it said. *—PTI*

Vedanta to demerge its businesses: Chairman Anil

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal on Wednesday said that the company is going ahead with the proposed demerger of its businesses that will lead to formation of six firms and unlocking of massive value.

The company has received approvals from the majority of its creditors for a proposed demerger of businesses, marking an important step in the company's plan to split into six independent listed companies.

Addressing shareholders during the 59th Annual General Meeting, the Chairman said, "We are going ahead with the demerger of our businesses, which will lead to the creation of 6 strong companies, each a Vedanta in its own right. This will unlock massive value."

Today 70 per cent of Vedanta's top line comes from critical minerals of the future, he said, adding that the company is committed to produce these metals and minerals sustainably.

The company, Agarwal said, had invested over USD 35 billion in India and remains committed to growth.

Vedanta had in September last year announced the demerger of metals, power, aluminium, and oil and gas businesses to unlock potential value. After the exercise, six independent verticals -- Vedanta Aluminium, Vedanta Oil & Gas, Vedanta Power, Vedanta Steel and Ferrous Materials, Vedanta Base Metals and Vedanta Limited -- will be created. *—PTI*

Vedanta invested over $35 billion in India PHOTO: PTI

PETA SEES FUTURE IN VEGAN LEATHER FROM AGRI-WASTE

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Animal rights group PETA India on Wednesday said India's position as a major global sugarcane producer offers significant opportunities for expanding the use of sugarcane-based vegan leather.

The organisation highlighted that India's vast sugarcane production could be leveraged to effectively utilise sugarcane waste through technology developed by PA Footwear P Ltd, a company specialising in vegan leather alternatives.

India, the world's second-largest sugar producer after Brazil, grows sugarcane in 55-60 million hectares area.

"India is one of the largest producers of sugarcane globally, so PA Footwear P Ltd's technology presents a significant opportunity to utilise sugarcane waste effectively," PETA India said in a statement.

PA Footwear P Ltd, in partnership with the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology, has developed Vegan Virya, a leather alternative made primarily from sugarcane. The material has received "PETA-Approved Vegan" certification from PETA India. *—PTI*

AMID RISING AIR-TRAFFIC

Norms come after incidents of damages in airports PHOTO: X/@AIRINDIA

DGCA frames safety measures for ground handling agencies

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Aviation watchdog Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has come out with safety standards for ground handling service providers at airports, including the compulsory safety clearance requirement, as part of efforts to ensure safe ground operations amid rising air traffic.

The norms also come against the backdrop of ground incidents at some airports that have resulted in damage to aircraft.

The new Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR), prepared after detailed consultations, will strengthen the oversight mechanism, DGCA said in a release on Wednesday.

It also specifies the training and competency requirements of ground personnel who are part of ground operations at the airports.

Ground Handling Service Providers (GHSPs) are required to obtain safety clearance within six months from the (DGCA).

Under the new norms, GHSPs are required to appoint accountable managers, station managers and safety managers. Among other requirements, ground personnel have to undergo recurrent training.

Larger aircraft, an increase in ground support equipment and faster turnarounds all contribute to the challenge of improving operational safety. *—PTI*

GOVT: URAD PRICES SOFTENING IN WHOLESALE MARKET

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

The government on Wednesday said urad prices have started to soften in the wholesale markets of Delhi and Indore on the back of its efforts to boost supply and reports of higher sowing in the ongoing Kharif season.

The area under coverage for urad has reached 5.37 lakh hectare till July 5 of this ongoing Kharif season compared to 3.67 lakh hectare last year.

The central government's proactive measures have been pivotal in stabilising prices for consumers while ensuring favourable price realisation for farmers, it added.

"As on 5 July, 2024, the area sown for Urad has reached 5.37 lakh hectare, as compared to 3.67 lakh hectare for the corresponding period last year," the statement said.

The 90-day crop is expected to experience a healthy Kharif production this year, the government hopes.

In Madhya Pradesh alone, a total of 8,487 urad farmers have already registered through NCCF and NAFED.

Other major producing states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh have seen pre-registrations of 2,037, 1,611, and 1,663 respectively. *—PTI*

Aadhaar-based eKYC introduced for LPG users

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

State-owned oil companies are conducting an Aadhaar-based eKYC authentication of LPG customers to weed out bogus ones, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

This is done to remove bogus customers under whose names cooking gas is booked but these are used by commercial establishments.

While households buy what is called domestic LPG for Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder (about Rs 56.5 per kg), commercial establishments like hotels and restaurants are mandated to buy a 19-kg commercial cylinder that comes for Rs 1,646 (Rs 86.3 per kg).

"There is no deadline for this activity either by oil marketing companies or the Central Government. It is also clarified by OMCs that there is no "Mustering" of customers at Showrooms of LPG distributorships," he said.

India has 32.64 crore active domestic LPG users, according to data from the Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell. *—PTI*

Flipkart expands e-payment offerings

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Indian e-commerce major Flipkart on Wednesday said it has partnered with payment solutions company Bill Desk to expand its digital payment offerings with five new categories. The expansion includes recharge and bill payment categories, including FasTag, DTH recharges, landline, broadband, and mobile postpaid bill payments, on the Flipkart app.

The home-grown marketplace has partnered with Bill Desk to help integrate the new services with Bharat Bill Payments System (BBPS), developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The new services are in addition to the existing electricity bill payment and mobile prepaid recharge options.

PHOTO:PTI

"We have diversified our selection of services in line with Flipkart's vision to simplify the digital payments journey for customers and further the government's vision of a cashless economy.

From buying their favourite products to addressing digital payment requirements, this enhancement has created a one-stop destination for customers to fulfill all their needs anytime, anywhere in a secure and seamless manner," said Gaurav Arora, Vice President, Payments and SuperCoins, at Flipkart. *—PTI*

SUV prices of Tata Motors, Mahindra cut to boost demand

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra have cut the prices of their SUV models to boost demand.

Tata Motors has revised the starting prices of its flagship SUVs, the Harrier (Rs 14.99 lakh) and the Safari (Rs 15.49 lakh) and extended benefits of up to Rs 1.4 lakh on other popular SUV variants.

The price cut will enable more people to experience the range, it added. *—PTI*

'TO REVISE STRATEGY'

Microsoft & Apple exit observer roles on OpenAI board

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

In a move reflecting shifting dynamics in the tech industry, both Microsoft and Apple have decided to relinquish their observer seats on the board of OpenAI, reported UK-based 'The Financial Times'.

The move comes amidst reports of increased regulatory scrutiny over the involvement of tech giants in AI startups.

Microsoft, which had invested significantly in OpenAI, including a substantial USD 13 billion investment in its generative AI technology, ChatGPT, has announced its immediate withdrawal from its observer role on OpenAI's board.

Microsoft had invested $13 billion in its AI technology PHOTO: PIXABAY

The decision was communicated via a letter to OpenAI, citing the company's satisfaction with the progress made by the newly formed board.

- While some suggest possible concerns over antitrust scrutiny or strategic disagreements, the exact motivations behind these decisions remain unclear

Similarly, Apple, which was expected to take up a similar observer role as part of an agreement to integrate ChatGPT into its devices, has opted not to do so.

Although Apple declined to comment on the matter, sources familiar with the situation indicate that the tech giant will not be taking an observer position on OpenAI's board.

In response to these developments, OpenAI has announced a revised strategy for engaging with its strategic partners and investors.

According to the FT report, the organisation plans to hold regular meetings with partners like Microsoft and Apple, along with investors such as Thrive Capital and Khosla Ventures.

This shift, as explained by an OpenAI spokesperson, aims to foster a more inclusive and collaborative approach to governance and strategic decision-making.

The board of OpenAI recently saw the addition of Phil Schiller, Apple's former marketing chief, as an observer, which was reported just days before these withdrawals.

However, Schiller will no longer be observing OpenAI's operations, highlighting the fluidity and perhaps underlying tensions within the organization's boardroom dynamics.

Analysts speculate that the decision by Microsoft and Apple to step back from their observer roles could be linked to strategic considerations or internal dynamics within OpenAI.

While some suggest possible concerns over antitrust scrutiny or strategic disagreements, the exact motivations behind these decisions remain unclear. *—ANI*

EURO 2024

Spain beat France 2-1 to reach final

At 16, Lamine Yamal is the youngest-ever scorer at EC

GEORGETOWN, 10 JULY

Even without the mask, Kylian Mbappé was outclassed by a 16-year-old wonderkid.

Mbappé ditched the vision-restricting mask that he had been wearing since breaking his nose in France's opening match but Les Bleus fell to a 2-1 loss to Spain in the semifinals on Tuesday as Lamine Yamal became the youngest goalscorer in the history of the European Championship.

Yamal is heading to the Euro 2024 final on Sunday the day after his 17th birthday while Mbappé will be on holiday before joining his new team Real Madrid.

"I had the aim of being European champion, I had the aim of having a good Euros — I didn't do one nor the other," Mbappé said. "It's disappointing, we have to go on holiday. I'll rest well, I think I need that to come back fresh and have a really good pre-season preparation." France coach Didier Deschamps had said on Monday that Mbappé would have to wear the mask for "weeks ... maybe months" so there was surprise when he took to the field in Munich without the mask that had so annoyed him.

"I was fed up, I couldn't see well with it," Mbappé said. "I spoke with the doctor to see and he told me to decide a man and I don't regret it."

Euro 2024 had hardly gone to plan for Mbappé and France before Tuesday's match — no French player had scored from open play with their three goals coming from a solitary Mbappé penalty and two own-goals.

France's Kylian Mbappe walks in dejection after Spain's Dani Olmo scores his side's second goal during a semifinal match between Spain and France, Lamine Yamal became the youngest player ever to score at the European Championship *PHOTO: X / UEFA.COM*

Mbappé had a total of 23 attempts at goal in Germany. Only Deco with 24 at Euro 2004 had more non-penalty shots without scoring.

The 25-year-old Mbappé had described the mask-wearing experience as "an absolute horror" and removing it seemed to have an immediate effect as he set up France's ninth-minute opener with a pinpoint cross to the back post for Randal Kolo Muani's headed goal. The France superstar should have scored and sent the match into extra time when he was released on the left by Bradley Barcola with four minutes remaining.

Mbappé seemed certain to score – and in front of France's fans – when he raced into the area and cut inside past Spain defender Dani Vivian but he uncharacteristically blazed his shot over the bar.

"I think I had to score, or at least hit the target," he said. "It went over and that's the harsh reality of football."

Yamal will turn 17 on Saturday, a day before the final in Berlin against either England or the Netherlands.

"I only ask to win, win, and win," said Yamal, who was voted player of the match. "I will celebrate my birthday in Germany with my team."

Yamal struck in the 21st minute, curling the ball past France goalkeeper Mike Maignan from around 25 yards and into the top left corner.

"I don't know if it is the best goal of the tournament, but it is the most special goal for me because it is my first goal with the team at a European Championship," he said.

Yamal is 16 years and 362 days old. The previous youngest scorer at a European Championship was Swiss player Johan Vonlanthen (18 years, 141 days), against France at Euro 2004.

"We are very happy to reach the final. Now comes the most important part winning the title," Yamal said. "We were in a difficult stretch after not expecting to concede so early. I just took the ball and wanted to put it right there.

"I don't try to think about it too much, just enjoy myself and help the team, and if it goes my way, then I am happy (for the goal) and for the win."

Yamal came to Euro 2024 with a bunch of "youngest" records and has inevitably set more. He became the youngest player to feature at a men's Euro when he started in Spain's opening 3-0 win over Croatia. The Barcelona teenager was already the youngest player to debut and score in the Spanish league at 15, the youngest player to start in the Champions League, and the youngest to score for Spain.

"We saw a touch of genius by a great player who we all know and have to nurture forward," Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said. "And I can only advise him to keep going forward with the same humility and work ethic and with his feet firmly on the ground. —*PTI*

Dravid is happy to forgo bonus amount

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

Rahul Dravid *PHOTO: PTI*

Former India head coach Rahul Dravid has refused to take the bonus amount of 2.5 crore offered to him by the BCCI following the recent T-20 World Cup triumph in the Americas.

Dravid was offered the bonus amount following the national team's success but he was happy to settle for the due amount 2.5 crore similar to other coaching staff. The BCCI wanted to repay Dravid for guiding India to the trophy in Barbados by hiking his reward to 5 crore, which is at par with the players, PTI has learned that the 51-year-old was happy with an equal paycheck as other coaching staff.

It was more of a goodwill gesture than any official call as Dravid's tenure as India coach had originally ended after last year's 50-over World Cup at home.

Dravid went on to end his India coaching stint as a World Cup winner.

Gambhir can derive the best out of his players: Childhood coach Bharadwaj

Gautam Gambhir *PHOTO: PTI*

Newly-appointed India head coach Gautam Gambhir can derive the best out of players when the chips are down, and his affinity to take up challenges head-on can make winning a habit for the national team feels his childhood coach Sanjay Bharadwaj.

Gambhir, the World Cup-winning former opener, was given the reins of the India team on Tuesday. He replaced Rahul Dravid, whose tenure ended with the country's title win in the T20 World Cup in Barbados last month.

"Gautam has the quality to bring the best out of his players. The job of a top coach is precisely that. Gauti knows his players well and can bring the best out of them, using them effectively.

"I feel, as a coach, he can take India to the pinnacle. He can do the job honestly without any bias and bring the best to Indian cricket. The (ODI) World Cup title which has eluded us for the last 13 years would now start coming," Bhardwaj told PTI Videos on Wednesday.

Bharadwaj, who has also produced Indian cricketers such as Amit Mishra, Unmukt Chand and Nitish Rana besides several Ranji players from Delhi.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Knibb resigns spot on US cycling team for Olympics

NEW YORK, 10 JULY

Taylor Knibb resigned from her position on the U.S. cycling team for the road race at the Paris Olympics on Tuesday and will be replaced by Kristen, who already had been picked to compete with the American pursuit squad in the velodrome. The decision by Knibb was not entirely surprising. Her specialty is the triathlon, and the two-time defending women's Ironman 70.3 world champion long has planned to compete in that event at her second consecutive Summer Games.—*PTI*

Diksha, Aditi set to tee off in Evian C'ships

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 10 JULY

Diksha Dagar will tee off at the Amundi Evian Championships, one of the Majors in women's golf, this week as she gears up for one of the busiest stretches of her career that also includes the Olympic Games in Paris. Also playing in the two Majors, including this week's Evian, is Aditi,who will also play in the Olympics and the Women's Scottish Open. The left-handed Diksha is coming off a T-14 finish at the Aramco Series London and has been showing signs of coming back into the kind of form that saw her finish third on the LET order of Merit.—*PTI*

Cooper Flagg is the prize, but entire class is intriguing

NEW YORK, 10 JULY

Rebuilding NBA teams and their fans all have their eyes on Cooper Flagg, the best prospect in the 2025 draft, but only one lucky team will land the dynamic two-way forward from Duke.But there are at least four other elite talents in the 2025 draft class and so teams landing anywhere in the top 5 of the lottery next May will have a chance to change the fortunes of their franchise. The 2024 NBA Draft ended two weeks ago. That means it's time to settle into the 2025 NBA Draft cycle. The good news? NBA executives are much more enthusiastic about this one than the 2024 version.—*PTI*

Argentina's Lionel Messi is congratulated after scoring his side's second goal against Canada *PHOTO: @COPAAMERICA*

Messi's 109th goal leads Argentina to Copa final

EAST RUTHERFORD, 10 JULY

Lionel Messi scored his 109th international goal and first of the tournament, leading defending champion Argentina over Canada 2-0 on Tuesday night and into the Copa America final.

Julián Álvarez put the Albiceleste ahead in the 22nd minute and Messi redirected Enzo Fernández's shot off the face of goalkeeper Maxime Crépeau in the 51st. Messi has 28 goals in his last 25 matches for Argentina and 14 in Copa America play, three shy of the record.

Only Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo with 130 has more international goals than Messi, who turned 37 on June 24. Iran's Al Daei had 108 or 109 from 1993 to 2006, with a lingering dispute over whether a goal against Ecuador in 2000 occurred in a full international match.

With a victory on its independence day, Argentina extended its unbeaten streak to 10 games. The Albiceleste seek a record 16th Copa title when they play Uruguay or Colombia on Sunday at Miami Gardens, Florida.

Lionel Messi says he will keep on playing for Argentina beyond Copa America final

Lionel Messi plans to keep playing for Argentina beyond Sunday's Copa America final

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner spoke outside the locker room at MetLife Stadium, where he announced his retirement after missing a penalty kick in the shootout loss to Chile in the 2016 Copa America final.

He reversed his decision seven weeks later and has scored 54 goals in 73 international appearances since, raising his matches for Argentina to 186 as he helped win the 2021 Copa America and 2022 World Cup.

—*PTI*

Sunil Gavaskar turns 75

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

It is difficult to be consistently relevant in an ever-evolving world. Unless, of course, one happens to be Sunil Gavaskar, who is celebrating the completion of 75 eventful summers in his life on Wednesday.

It's tough for today's young cricket fans, who have grown up watching IPL big hits, to truly understand the significance of Gavaskar, as often they have a shrunken image of him a former cricketer turned commentator in their mind.

Now, there are too many of them. Or, perhaps, it's the recency bias.

However, Gavaskar, who tackled some of the meanest pace bowlers to have walked on earth, remains a colossus in the minds of his contemporaries, who fondly recall the greatness of the right-hand great." Gavaskar made his debut two years after my retirement.

—*PTI*

India snatch 2-1 lead in T20I series vs Zimbabwe

HARARE, 10 JULY

India captain Shubman Gill hailed their "remarkable" team effort on a two-paced wicket as they defeated Zimbabwe by 23 runs in the third T20I to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series here on Wednesday.

The elegant Indian opener returned to form with a 49-ball 66 to power them to 182 for four before the bowlers restricted the hosts to 159 for six.

This was India's second successive win as they bounced back from the first match reversal to snatch the lead."It was a crucial match for us and the way we started with batting and bowling, it was remarkable," Gill said during the post-match presentation. India made a resounding comeback in the second T20I where they posted a mammoth 234 for 2. Asked if he was a little disappointed that the team couldn't reach 200 in the third

Washington Sundar *PHOTO: PTI*

T20, Gill said: "...the wicket was a bit double-paced, the oddball was gripping and it was not easy to hit the length ball."We just wanted to keep hitting the length with the ball as well. We know if there is something in the wicket, it will be there for the bowlers. Everyone has contributed, right from openers, to bowlers."Washington Sundar, who was adjudged the Player of the Match. India 182 for 4 (Gill 66, Gaikwad 49, Jaiswal 36, Raza 2-24, Muzarabani 2-25) beat Zimbabwe 159 for 6 (Myers 65*, Madande 37, Washington 3-15, Avesh 2-39) by 23 runs. —*PTI*

Djokovic enters Wimbledon SFs

LONDON, 10 JULY

Novak Djokovic got a free pass into the Wimbledon semifinals on Wednesday when his quarterfinal opponent, Alex de Minaur, withdrew with a hip injury.

De Minaur, an Australian who was seeded ninth at the All England Club, announced he was pulling out of the tournament hours before he and Djokovic were scheduled to play each other at Centre Court. "Not an announcement I wanted to make, by any means," De Minaur said at a news conference. "I'm devastated."

Djokovic *PHOTO: @ATPTOUR*

He explained that he heard a crack toward the end of his 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 fourth-round victory over Arthur Fils on Monday. De Minaur walked gingerly to the net when that match ended, but he downplayed the severity of things when he spoke to the media afterward.

The walkover places Djokovic in the Wimbledon semifinals for the 13th time, equaling Roger Federer for the most by a man in tournament history. The second-seeded Djokovic has won seven of his men's-record 24 Grand Slam titles at Wimbledon. Djokovic will face Taylor Fritz or Lorenzo Musetti on Friday for a berth in the final.

The extent of the injury was clear from medical exams on Tuesday, de Minaur said.

—*PTI*

President Murmu *PHOTO: PTI*

Work together for upliftment of Indian football: President Murmu

NEW DELHI, 10 JULY

President Draupadi Murmu on Wednesday asked the stakeholders of Indian football to work together for the upliftment of the game in the country as she flagged off the trophy tour of the century-old Durand Cup tournament.

The 133rd edition of Asia's oldest and world's fifth oldest tournament begins on July 27 and will be played in four cities — Kolkata, Kokrajhar in Assam, Shillong in Meghalaya and Jamshedpur in Jharkhand.

"Football is the most popular sport in the world. Professional footballers entertain people. Currently, Euro 2024 is going on and it is being followed the world over, it's everywhere in the news," President Murmu said in her address at a function at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"All the stakeholders in the country should work together for the upliftment of the game in India."

She reminded the gathering of the contribution of the Durand Cup — named after its founder Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, the foreign secretary of India from 1884 to 1894 — in the country's football tradition.

—*PTI*

PARIS OLYMPICS

Simone, LeBron to bid 'adieu' to Olympics

NEW YORK, 10 JULY

At 27, Biles is the oldest American woman to make an Olympic gymnastics team since the 1950s. Having returned from a two-year break last summer, Biles can add to her career haul of seven Olympic medals four of them gold when she competes at the Bercy Arena.

At 39, James is about to become the first U.S. men's basketball player to compete at the Olympics in three different decades. To get an idea of what stage he's at in his career, consider this: When James and the U.S. team opened their Olympic training camp in Las Vegas, his son, Bronny, was making his pro debut for the Los Angeles Lakers in the California Classic summer league.

Murray's goodbye to Wimbledon didn't go the way he had hoped. The British player is hoping for a better result in the Olympic tennis competition on the red clay of Roland Garros, home of the French Open. Paris will mark Murray's fifth Olympics, having won back-to-back singles golds in 2012 and 2016. While Murray has indicated that he plans to end his career after the Olympics, Nadal's status is less clear. But playing the Olympics at the site where he won 14 French Opens — and where there's a statue of him outside Court Philippe Chatrier — will be special no matter what Nadal does next.

Simone Biles and LeBron James

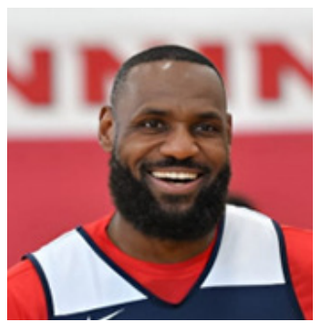


PHOTO: @KINGJAMES

- At 39, James is about to become the first U.S. men's basketball player to compete at the Olympics in three different decades.

Nadal has won Olympic gold in both singles (in 2008) and doubles (in 2016) and will team up with Carlos Alcaraz for doubles in Paris.

Simone Biles and LeBron James lead the list of athletes likely competing at their final Olympics.

Add in that Andy Murray will be retiring after the Paris Games and that Rafael Nadal may bid goodbye to tennis, too, and the stage is set for some emotional, high-profile goodbyes. —*PTI*

Zaheer, Balaji likely to be India's next bowling coach

CHENNAI, 10 JULY

Former seamers Zaheer Khan and Lakshmipathy Balaji are being considered for the position of national team's bowling coach, as per sources. "BCCI discussing the names of Zaheer Khan and Lakshmipati Balaji for the position of bowling coach. BCCI is not interested in the name of Vinay Kumar," sources told ANI. Zaheer has picked up 311 Test wickets in 92 matches and overall 610 scalps in 309 international matches across all formats for Men in Blue. He is considered one of the greatest left-arm pacers to have played the sport.

The appointment of a new set of support staff for Team India follows the appointment of Gautam Gambhir as head coach. The term of Paras Mahambrey, who was the bowling coach of team India,

L Balaji *PHOTO: PTI*

has come to an end. Earlier, the Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary Jay Shah on Tuesday announced that former cricketer Gautam Gambhir has been appointed as the Indian men's cricket team's new head coach.

The BCCI secretary added that he has his full confidence in Gambhir and that he will be the ideal person to steer Indian Cricket forward.

— *ANI*